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## A STUDY IN EBONY



# A STUDY IN EBONY

By  
DOTIA TRIGG COONEY



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**TO THE MEMORY OF MY HUSBAND**



## A STUDY IN EBONY

### CHAPTER I

"Now, Miss Gilmo', I do wish 'at you would look at dese ole grasshoppers. Ole Mr. Grasshopper do make me so tired—he tries to be so manish. Do you know 'at he chaws terbacker? Yas, ma'm, he do. He takes ole dry leaves an chaws 'em up, an' makes lack 'at dey is terbacker."

The lady addressed looked up; a little brown-skinned girl about six years of age stood before her. She was small for her years, having an old face that would have been homely but for two large bright black eyes. Her name was Ethey. She was the child of Mrs. Gilmore's cook and had been an occupant of the house only two weeks; but those two weeks had given her ample time to take the mistress of the house under her wing, both for protection and instruction.

"Yas, ma'm, he chaws terbacker—see where he done spit anbeer on my han'," showing a small brown spot on the palm of her hand as proof of the accusation. Then, opening a small paste-board box with air-holes cut in sides and top, she disclosed two fine, healthy looking grasshoppers, eating cornbread on the bottom of the box. "I calls dis dey house, but dey calls it de lock-up. An' dey use to try awful hard to git out, tell I crumelled cornbraid in de box. Now dey stay tarble satisfied, tell dey gits dey little se'ves filled up.

"An' now heah," taking a similar box from the porch step, "is one er dem outdacious little yeller buffin' butterflies. She stuffs herself, too, ev'ry chance she gits. She is mighty inn'cent lookin', but she is de biggis' rogue! An' what e'er you does, don't you e'er lay down you cornbraid, ef you don't want it et up. Ef I goes to sleep on de step 'fore I done et up all my cornbraid, when I wakes up dat little thief done et it. She is too good fuh nothin' to work fuh her livin'—jes think 'at she aint got nuffin to do but sail 'roun' an look pretty. But little ole Miss Butterfly better look out, I'm tellin' you! Yistiddy I saw ole Mr. Blue Jay mos' swaller her sister whole. She come a sailin' fruh de air wif her nose stuck up at de ants an de grasshoppers, an ole Mr. Blue Jay pounce down on her, an in jes 'bout two pecks all her fine cloze wuz gone. An' I wuz'nt sorry, neither, 'cause she is sich a turble rogue.

"Miss, did you know 'at ole Mr. Blue Jay wuz Satan's own chile?" Receiving a negative reply, she continued: "Yas'm, he is, an' he packs san' to de debel ev'ry Friday mornin'. Now you think, you doesn't recollect e'er seein' no blue-jays on Friday, does you? My gran'mama say 'at she is look fuh 'em lots er times; but she ain't e'er seed none, 'cause dey is so busy doin' Satan's work."

Stopping and looking at a group of little colored children going to school, she said: "Uh-uh! Take keer! Look, Miss, won't you! Please, ma'm, look at dem little imps er Satan! See how dey is rubber-nakin' at me 'cause I's heah on dis porch close to you, keepin' dem wile beasts from

you. Dey know well 'nough 'at you isn't safe one minnit in dis big yard wifout me. But what would dey keer ef ole wile beastes wuz to bite you haid off? Why, nuffin! Dey wouldn't werry dey minds 'bout it one minnit. Go 'long dare, you black apes!" she continued, in a low grumbling tone, "You kin nod you nappy haid plum off, an' you kin wink dem eyeballs clare out you haid—I's goin' to stay in dis white lady's front yard all I wants to.

"I knows 'nough to know 'at a white lady isn't safe goin' 'roun' in dis town by herse'f," she continued, turning to Mrs. Gilmore, "not even in her pha'ton, when all kin's er wile beastes what God e'er is made is walkin' 'roun' in dis town. Now, Miss, won't you, please, ma'm, listen to me," seeing that Mrs. Gilmore was turning the leaves of a magazine, "fuh I tell you 'at you is got to be mighty keerful where you goes. Don't you ne'er go neah no high weeds; fuh dare is where ole Mr. Blue Racer lives, an' ef you go dare he'll git you, sho!—'cause he is always at home, waitin' fuh white ladies to come 'long so he kin git 'em; an' ef he do once-t bite 'em, dey draps daid de ve'y nex minnit, fuh he is rank pizen. An' don't you ne'er go neah no ole logs an' stumps; for dare is where de lizards an' toads lives, an' dey is rank pizen, too."

Mrs. Gilmore was, of course, entirely ignorant of Mr. Blue Racer and his personal appearance, and on inquiry, that she might know him should she meet him, was told that he was a large snake, so black that he was blue, and that he could out-

run the swiftest horses by taking the tip end of his tail in his mouth and rolling like a hoop. The interest with which Mrs. Gilmore always listened to her admonitions, and the fact that she was allowed to enjoy many drives behind the seat of her mistress' phaeton, as well as to follow her around the house and grounds, convinced Ethey that her counsel was heeded and seemed to lend wings to her imagination, until the lady felt that the little Missouri town had become a veritable land of wonder, and that she had only to follow the little colored girl to be "shown"; for her descriptive powers were so fine that one had only to listen to see.

When she had finished this warning regarding Mr. Blue Racer, she pointed to an ant-hill on the sidewalk near, saying: "Now, I's prouder er dese little thin's en any little varmints on dis place. Jes won't you, please, ma'm, look at dese little ants! Aint dey de workin'es' little thin's 'at you e'er is set you two eyes on? Dey don't min' who sees 'em work. De butterflies kin put on all dey finery an' sail 'roun' 'em, but dey don't even stop to see what kind er cloze dey got on. Jes see dem little chillun ants!" in a very caressing tone. "See how dey is he'pin' dey mama! Dat's right, little chillun, he'p you mama pack in de stove-wood, an' don't you fuhgit 'at you has dem little black faces an' han's to wash 'fore you goes to school, so you kin git some learnin' in dem little ole black noggins er youarn. Hurry up! Hurry up an' git you work done, an' don't you pay no 'tention 'tall to dem lazy, roguish butterflies. Ef

you wuz to ax 'em where dey git dey fine cloze, dey would be 'shame to tell you. Ne'er mind! You'll be eatin' yo' fine dinners dis winter when dey is done dried up an' blowd away. Dey isn't fitten fuh nuffin but to feed to de blue jay no-how.

"Oh, Miss, dis worl' sho is 'stonishin'! It's so full er thin's, an' dey all has a move on 'em. Dey is all up an' a comin'—you kin bet you sweet life on dat! I knows almos' all dey is to know 'bout 'em 'cause I travels 'roun' an' gits 'quainted, an' dey doesn't git mad at me—well, nobody 'ceptin' Mr. Blue Racer. He don't take much foolishness off people, cause he is kinder tetchy.

"But ole Mr. Tumblin' Bug, he is so outlandish actin'! I'll bet 'at you wouldn't know ole Mr. Tumblin' Bug ef you wuz to meet him in de big road. I saw him out in de road dis mornin', rollin' his ball 'long. But I doesn't pay much 'tention to him, 'cause he aint up-to-da'. He ain't even fuss class. A Lady Bug won't no mo' socherate wif a tumblin' bug en ef he don't b'long to her nation. No'm, I reckon' she wouldn't," turning her head disdainfully. "Ef she meets him in de road, she sticks her haid up in de air an' runs jes as fas' as she kin. Yas'm, she do. She 'tends lack 'at somebody done tole her 'at her house wuz on fire, an' her little chilluns wuz goin' to git burnt up ef she don't hurry."

"Who is Lady Bug?" asked Mrs. Gilmore, as Ethey paused for breath. "Is she a real lady and up-to-date?"

"I reckon' she is a real lady an' up-to-da'! An' she dress in style, too. She wear a beauterful

red satin dress, an' she pomperdores her hair. But she don't haf to wear one dress all the time. She have lots er dresses up dem stairs in her house; an' when she wants to, she kin put on her low-naked evenin' dresses, an' she kin wear lots er jewelry an' dimonts. Dat is, ef she wants to, she kin. But you don't want to try to go up to Mrs. Lady Bug's house, 'cause her house is 'way up de tree, higher en de pecker-wood's nes'. I saw her goin' up dare dis mornin', an' she wuz a holdin' on to de banisters an' clamin' dem stairs jes as hard as she could. She wuz done mos' out er bref, she wuz so tired clamin' dem stairs. You wouldn't be fitten fuh nuffin fuh a week ef you wuz to try to clam Mrs. Lady Bug's stairs."

Mrs. Gilmore opened her eyes, but said nothin'. "I know," she continued, "'at you thinks dey is a lots er quare thin's in dis country. An' you'll keep yo' eyes bugged out all de time ef you jes goes 'roun' wif me an' lets me show you. Dey is down under de groun', dey is in de grass, an' even promernadin' 'roun' up in de air."

"But Lady Bug's house up the tree——"

"Now, Miss," said Ethey, excitedly, "you listen to me. You doesn't haf to clam trees in dis country to see thin's; dey is jes spread out all over it, an' all you has to do is to keep yo' eyes open an' look.

"I hasn't e'er tooken you down to where ole Mr. Tarpin lives, is I?" When informed by Mrs. Gilmore that she had not, she said: "I wuz mos' sho 'at I hasn't. Ole Mr. Tarpin lives down in de pastur', an' ef you will go quick you kin see



him. He promernades down dare, an' he keeps he umbrelle raised up over him all de time. Come quick, an' you mus' walk mighty easy an' tiptoe y ef you gits to see him, fuh he is mighty skeery 'bout white ladies. When he heahs 'em comin' he draws he haid up under he umbrelle, an' he wouldn't move, not ef it wuz to save you soul from torment." A search in the pasture proved that Mr. Tarpin had heard the tiptoeing and secreted himself. "Now aint dat jes lack him!" said Ethey. "He jes done tuck up dem lags an' flewd, 'cause he know 'at I want yo' to see him.

"But look, Miss," stopping suddenly and jumping over something in the path, which proved to be a big brown, hairy worm. "You see dat feverworm? Spit three times, quick, 'fore you draw yo' bref. Dat's right," as Mrs. Gilmore obeyed the order. "Now you won't have de fever. Ole Mr. Feverworm don't do nuffin but promernade 'roun', tryin' to slip up on somebody what don't know 'nough to spit when dey see him. He done give up tryin' to git ahaid er me. He mus' sho' think 'at white ladies is green, ef dey doesn't know 'nough to spit when dey sees a feverworm, an'," indignantly, "he mus think 'at I is got mighty little to do to 'low you to go 'roun' by you'se'f when you doesn't know what kind er varment you is goin' to meet. Miss, do you know 'at I gits mo' an' mo' skeerd 'bout you all de time? 'Cause you seems so fuhgitful 'bout how I tells you to ac'. Yo' gran'mamma wuzn't part Injun, wuz she?" she asked in great solicitude.

"No," said Mrs. Gilmore, "I do not think that she was."

"Well," said Ethey, shaking her head dubiously, "I wuz 'fraid 'at she wuzn't. You'll have to be mo' an' mo' 'tickler all de time how you goes 'roun' heah."

"Bless yo' sweet little heart, honey," as she picked a leaf from a bush near, "come an' show yo' little se'f to de lady? Now, heah is one er dem cute little medgerin' worms. Don't you git skeered er him," as Mrs. Gilmore drew away from the proffered gift—"he won't hurt you; he brings you good luck. It's a sho sign 'at you'll git a new dress ef he lights down on you an' comenstes to take yo' medger. Don't you know 'at it's good luck for a spider to spin in de air over you? Yas'm, when you looks up in de air an' sees a spider spinnin', you kin jes know 'at you'll git money, 'cause he is spinnin' gol'. An' Aunt Mary Spicer say 'at ef a beaautiful diffe'nt colored butterfly lights down on you, an' you bite off he haid, you'll git a new dress wif all dem diffe'nt colors in it. But ef you wuz to do it, it would make you heave turble. I know it would me, fuh I isn't got no i'on insides to go 'roun' bitin' de haid off er all kinds er varments."

"Now, ef you will come wif me in dis little gully," referring to a small ravine which ran through the pasture, "I'll show you where ole Mr. Crawfish an' ole Mr. Frog lives." On the banks and in the thick black mud were several large holes. Pointing to one in the mud, she

said: "Dare is where ole Mr. Crawfish lives, an' I tell you now, don't you e'er go in a wadin' heah, fuh ef Mr. Crawfish wuz to grab holt er yo' foot oncet he wouldn't let go tell it thunders. An' wouldn't you 'stonish people goin' 'roun' wif a crawfish stickin' to yo' naked foot!

"An' dare is where ole Mr. Frog lives. He done buil' he house way down under de groun'. Dat's he front do'," pointing to a large hole on the bank. "Yas'm," as Mrs. Gilmore looked surprised, "he have got a awful fine house down dare under de groun'. He have a parlor, an' a sittin'-room, an' a dinin'-room, jes lack white folks' house. But," said she, turning her head away in disgust, "he got too stuck up fuh he own nation, an' what you reckon he do? Why, he have de imp'dence to buckle on he sward an' pistol, an' he go ax Miss Mousey will she be he wife. But Miss Mousey aint skeer'd er dat sward an' pistol, so she don't do nuffin' but say 'No,' an' she tell him pint out 'at ef he wants a wife he better go an' git him one er he own nation.

"Oh, I's heyard a lot er poetry 'bout ole Mr. Frog, but I can't recollect' it now. An' my gran'-mama, she knows a heap 'bout him. But I know one thin'—he aint got no very good raisin', an' I don't keer how big he house is, an' how many rooms he got in it, he aint fuss class. No'm, nobody don't 'cuse Mr. Frog er bein' up-to-da'; he ain't nuffin but a strainer. My gran'mama say 'at a strainer makes her tired er en anybody, 'cause he try so hard to be somebody an' can't. He jes

swell up an' holler tell he mos' bus hisse'f wide open, but he can't say nuffin, not ef it wuz to save he soul from torment.

"Now, Miss, don't you know 'at dis country is plum live wif thin's?" Seeing that Mrs. Gilmore stood with wide-open eyes and mouth, she continued: "Dis is de fulles' worl' er thin's 'at you e'er is set yo' two eyes on', an' don't you fuhgit it. Do you know 'at you can't hardly breave fuh 'em, an' ef you opens yo' mouf too wide, dey goes right in dare? Didn't ole Mr. Fly walk right down my gran'mama's froat yuther day when she open her mouf to gap? Yas'm, an' she haf to mos' heave up her insides, too, 'fore he would come out."

"Did old Mr. Fly know that your grandmother was part Indian?"

"Oh, pshaw!" she replied quickly, "ole Mr. Fly wuzn't thinkin' 'bout whe'er she wuz part Injun or not; he jes want to go in dare, an' he go. Ole Mr. Fly got so much cur'osity.

"An' dese heah trees furnis' a fine shade fuh ole Mr. Frog an' Mrs. Frog, an' dey brings out dey rockin' cheers an' sets in dis fine shade to res' deyse'vs. Now ole Mr. Toad, he sets on a stool; but ole Mr. Frog don't, I'm come to tell you. No'm, ole Mr. Frog feel hisse'f 'bove settin' on a stool. Dey is lots er diffe'ence in 'tween Mr. Frog an' Mr. Toad, an' don't you call Mr. Frog Mr. Toad ef you don't want to 'sult him. Mr. Frog is a lots mo' uppisher en Mr. Toad, 'cause you know 'at ole Mr. Frog dress hisse'f in a fine suit er cloze, wif de beautifules' diffe'nt

colored spots on it, an' when he starts out he thinks 'at he is a high-stepper an' a high-flyer an' a high-roller, too. Den, what you reckon he do when he meet ole Mr. Toad in de big road? Ole Mr. Frog do make me laugh, 'cause he have so much imp'dence. When he meet Mr. Toad in de big road, he stick up he nose in de air an' say: 'Stan' back, Mr. Clodhopper, an' let yo' marster pass by!' An' ef Mr. Toad sass him, he tell him 'at he isn't nuffin but a hayseed no-how, wif all dem warts on him. An' now, will you, please, ma'm, listen right keerful to me? Whate'er you does, don't you e'er pick up ole Mr. Toad—not even ef he hops right up to sides you—'cause he would make warts come on you.

"But I do wish 'at you could see old Mr. Frog ketch flies," she continued, as she walked stealthily up and down the bank, peeping under the little tufts of grass. "He is sich a ole rascal! He sets right still on de creek banks, an' ef he sees a fly, er a gnat, er any little bug promernadin' 'roun' up in de air, he sticks out he tongue, an' ef dey lights down on it, dey gits et up. My gran'mama say 'at he puts lasses on he tongue to work a trick on 'em.

"Miss, do you see dem crab-apple trees? Dey is fine, an' dey fills dis country wif 'fumery when dey blossoms out. An' dey is hick'nut trees heah, too, an' some er 'em is scaly barks. Mama wuz showin' 'em to me yistiddy, an' she say 'at scaly barks is better en dem yuther kin's. An' I kin tell you 'at little ole Mrs. Squirrel is got her eyes on dese hick'nuts dis minnit; she can't hardly trus'

herse'f 'way from dese trees 'tall, she is so 'fraid 'at dey'll git ripe an' somebody else will git some.

"Would you b'lieve it, Miss, Mrs. Squirrel kin set down an crack a hick'nut jes as good as folks any day? An' ole Mr. Dog do git turble mad at her 'cause he can't clam dat tree; fuh he would walk on de sky ef he could, he's so uppish—de ole black rascal! Why, he even think 'at Mrs. Squirrel an' Mrs. Rabbit isn't got no right to draw dey own brea'f. Here he comes now, ole black rascal—comin' to flourish his tail under dese hick'nut trees jes to werry Mrs. Squirrel. Miss, dat ole Benjerman Tilman is jes 'bout as werrysome to Mrs. Squirrel as dat lazy black Pete 'at hitches up Eli is to me. But, Lawd, Mrs. Squirrel don't min' him. She kin set on a lim' right o'er he haid, an' shake an' flourish dat tail er hern an' sass him fuh all 'at is out, an' he can't he'p hisse'f.

"But Mrs. Rabbit don't werry herse'f 'bout hick'nuts gittin' ripe. My gran'mama say 'at she goes in de garden an' he'p herse'f to peas an' cabbages. I'll bet 'at you can't tell what Mrs. Squirrel says to Mrs. Rabbit when she wants to 'sult her? She do it jes fuh fun, you know—she is sich a great ole joker. When she sees Mrs. Rabbit hoppin' an' kurvortin' 'roun' de pasture, she holler an' say: 'Hello, Mollie Cottontail, what you cuttin' up dem monkey-shines 'bount?' Den Mrs. Rabbit sticks up dat little ole white tail in de air an' jes flies; an' when she gits way away, she stops an' turns 'roun' an' sets down an' sticks out her little ole long mouf jes shameful at Mrs. Squirrel. Den Mrs. Squirrel jes hollers an'

laughs, fuh she knows 'at ole Mrs. Rabbit is 'sulted. Oh, but dat ole lady do have her own fun out er Mrs. Rabbit!

"But little ole Mrs. Rabbit is a turble ole joker, too. She put some aiggs under de laylock bush fuh me one time, an' den she 'tended to me 'at she done lay dem beauterful diffe'ent colored aiggs herse'f. An' one day down in de pasture I saw her, an' I holler at her an' say: 'I is much 'bleeged to you, Mrs. Rabbit, fuh dem beauterful diff'ent colored aiggs what you lay fuh me under de laylock bush. An' she put her little ole han' up 'fore her face an' mos' bus' herse'f laughin', fuh she thunk 'at I wuz a humbug. But ef I could slip up behin' Mrs. Rabbit an' cut off dat little ole white tail wifout hurtin' her, I'd git it fuh you to put whittenin' on yo' face wif. Dat is, ef it wouldn't hurt her, an' I knowed 'at a yuther tail would come out in de place er it, I would lack to git it fuh you, 'cause it would be so handy fuh you to put in yo' puff-box to primp yo'se'f wif.

"But now I kin tell you somebody 'at is sho 'nough mean, an' dat is little ole Mrs. Screechowl. Do you see dat little cedar tree yonder? Do you know 'at ole Mrs. Screechowl lives dare? Yas'm, she keeps awful still all day long; but when night comes she flies up close to de hen-house an' peeps 'roun' an' listens, an' ef any er dem little chillun chickens is out er dey coops, she grabs 'em by de back er de neck an' takes 'em to her house fuh her little chillun screechowls' supper. An' ef she don't see any er 'em out er dey coops, she tries how pitterful she kin ac'. She hollers an' cries,

an' makes out 'at she is sick. She hollers awful pitterful, to git dem little chillun chickens to come out er dey coops so 'at she kin git 'em. But dey mama is too sharp, an' she say to 'em: 'No, you doesn't have to go out dare to git et up by ole Mrs. Screechowl an' her little chilluns.'

"An', would you b'lieve it, Miss, 'at pant'ers tries to work a trick on folks jes lack ole Mrs. Screechowl? Yas'm, dey does. Dey kin holler an' cry lack a little baby, an' sometimes dey goes up close to people's houses in de nighttimes an' hollers an' cries, an' ef anybody thinks 'at it's a little baby an' goes out dare, dey gits et up."

Then, stopping and listening, and looking from side to side, she said in a startled, frightened tone: "Oh, but dey is somethin' turble what hants dis country, an' I tell you he is dang'us, an' you better keep yo' eye skun fuh him all de time, an' dat is de debel's darnin'-needle. Oh, but he is skeery lookin'! He look lack a great big black thorn wif lags an' wings hitched on to him; but I doesn't go lookin' fuh him, an' ef I sees him, I runs lack a tucky, sho as you is born. I jes reckon I is skeered er him," rolling her big white eyes. "Cause why? Well, I kin tell you," moving nearer Mrs. Gilmore and speaking in a whisper, "why, he comes from graveyards! He comes up fruh de graves from torment! I'd mos' as soon meet a sperit in de big road any day as de debel's darnin'-needle. But ole Mr. Debel fines he darnin'-needle turble handy to darn he cloze when he scotches 'em by dat hot fire down in torment. Pete say 'at he gits so 'cited pilin' dem chunks up



'roun' dem folks down dare 'at he mos' gits he own se'f burnt up."

"Well, mama," said Ethey, as she seated herself in the kitchen door, after her return from the pasture, "I jes been down in de pasture wif dat white lady, showin' her 'roun', an' I think 'at dis place suits me better an' better. I lack de lady an' I lack de place; I have so much range heah, wif dis big yard an' trees, an' de big pasture back er heah, wif de gully an' hick'nut trees, an' all dem varments promernadin' 'roun' down dare. Dey is mighty few colored chillun what lives wif white people have sich fine range."

"Yas," replied the mother, "you have too fine a range to suit me. You kin git out er yeahshot er me too quick. Why, half de time, when I wants ye to run errants, you's in de house gittin' entertainment lack a white lady. Miss goin' to spile you so dey won't be no livin' wif you."

"Lawdy, mama, I can't he'p it! She do tell me sich 'stonishin' tales what she gits out er dem books. But don't I wush 'at I could read dem books! You wouldn't think from dey looks 'at dey wuz anythin' so 'stonishin' in 'em. But oh my!—dat ole man wif de golden tetch! He turn ev'rythin' to gol' what he tetch."

"What you talkin' 'bout, gal?" said the mother, in surprise.

"It's de Lawd's trouf, mama, an' Miss show me de picture er de ole man in de book. But folks don't want to turn ev'rythin' to gol', I'm come to tell you; fuh when dat ole man go to eat he breakfas', he batter cakes don't mo' en tetch he

mouf tell dey turns to gol', an' co'se he can't eat 'em. An' when he onlies' little girl chile comes in an' sees him lookin' sorry, an' she commensted to cry an' throwd her arms 'roun' her papa's neck, she don't mo' en tetch him tell she turned to gol', an' stan' dare wif gol' tear-drops rollin' down her cheeks an' rattlin' down on de flo'."

"Uh-uh!" said the mother, laughing and shaking her head, "Miss sho is havin' her fun greenin' you wif dem fairy tales."

"An' I kin green her, too," said the child, getting up and standing nearer her mother, "when I shows her thin's on dis place. Why, would you b'lieve it?—even a little ole grasshopper er a medgerin' worm kin make her eyes bug out. But dat great big ole dictionary what stan's open all de time in de house, an' have all dem pictures er wile beastes in de back part! Don't I wush I could read de names er dem wile beastes! Why, mama, dey is a reg'lar circus parade in de back part er dat ole dictionary. Dey is turble skeery lookin', too, when I's in dat house by myse'f, 'cause I don't know what dey might do to me. I gits so skeered 'at I runs out, an' I don't go in dare no mo', neither, tell Miss go back."

"Well, you's so fond er goin' 'roun' with Miss, you may git to go on a broad—as yo' gran'mama use to say—with her tomorrow. She is goin' out to ole gent'man William's to spen' de day, an' she tole me 'at she might need you to go 'long to keep de boogers off."

"Well, I sho kin do it, ef she wants me—an'

you let me," her face brightening, then as quickly growing serious. "But who will take keer er you while I'm way out in de country? Sposin' my papa wuz to come back from dat 'vorce an' try to kill you some mo'?"

"You need'nt be skeerd er dat nigger comin' back heah; he's too 'fraid er de lock-up. He know 'at he would'nt mo' en set his foot in dis yard tell de perlice would have him."

"But don't you know, mama, 'at ev'ry time I look at dat ole scar to side you eye I feel sick all inside er me, an' I feel my min' so full er werryments 'at I mos' dies. Why, ef ever I wuz to git a quare notion in my haid, an' think 'at I could go to school an' git high learnt, an' be a school-teacher an' git big pay, an' buy you a home, so he'p me Lawdy ef I wouldn't be skeerd fuh us to go an' live in it by ourse'ves. Now, wouldn't we be set up," laughing, "ef you an' me had a house wif a front room, an' lace curtains at de winders, an' you could set up in dare an' rock an' crochet an' look out at de front winder, while I read you sich 'stonishin' tales out er books 'at you wouldn't know whe'er you wuz on de groun' er up in de air?"

"I tell you now, chile, I could set up an' rock an' crochet an' listen to readin' an' look out at yo' front winder with a mighty good grace dis hot weather. But I reckon' you won't hardly git my house built befo' nex' spring, anyhow?"

"I don't know'm. I'll be six, you know, on Mancerpation Day; den it won't be long befo' I

starts to school, an' I tell you now when I gits a chance at dat schoolhouse er learnin', as Sis Hunter says, I'll be a clipper."

"Well, dat's all right, but don't gragerate an' git yo' dayplumeyer befo' you starts to school. But, as I wuz goin' to tell you, we's goin' to git up early in de mornin', so as to give you a early start, so you kin git dare in time to have yo' names put in de pot."

"Yas'm, an' dat ole gent'man, he's de one what my gran'mama calls Marse William, an' use to own my gran'mama an' my gran'papa? Well, I don't want to miss dat trip, fuh I sho mus' see dat ole gent'man befo' I die. I done heah tell er him too long to talk 'bout. An' now, mama, please don't let Miss fuhgit to read de riat ac' to Pete 'bout not sleepin' over hisse'f tomorrow."

Early next morning Ethey was up an hour before breakfast. Perched on the top of a front gate-post, she impatiently waited for Pete to make his appearance. When he finally came, and breakfast was over, and her mother had placed her snugly on a cushion in the phaeton behind Mrs. Gilmore, she exclaimed with a sigh of relief: "At las' we is haided fuh Marse Williams!" as the boy slowly preceded them to open the gate, the horse following at his heels. "Lawd knows, Miss," she added, "'at I knows 'at I isn't de mistress er dis place, an' I hope 'at you don't think 'at I think I is; but ef I wuz, I'd make dat lazy Pete git some action in his heels. But, den, dey isn't no tellin' what might happen ef he wuz to once-t move off lively. Ef de jedgment day didn't

come, I'm 'fraid de sky might fall down. Now, ef we don't git a good dinner out to dat ole gent'-man William's, you kin blame dat lazy, good-fuh-nothin' Pete—'tendin 'at he done fuhgit 'bout our early start. Mama says 'at dey is jes two thin's 'at dat nigger don't fuhgit to do, an' dat is eat an' git away from heah."

She indulged thus in imprecations against the boy until they were well on the country road, suggesting many forms of punishment for his delinquencies, among them, hanging him on a nail until he got tired of resting for once. "Lawdee!" she suddenly exclaimed, "does we have to pass by de 'Feeble-Minded?' Well, we kin glimpse it good now, as Sis' Hunter says. She says it's a beautiful place, an' it is a rich-lookin' place. But dem po' little crooked an' twisted chilluns is anything but rich-lookin' to me. But Aunt Susan Young tole mama yuther day 'at dey wuz high learnt—dat is, fuh feeble-minded. You know, dey has a fine school fuh 'em. Dey isn't no colored chillun in dare, thank goodness! Aunt Susan says 'at colored chillun got too much sense to git feeble-minded," laughing and looking slyly at Mrs. Gilmore.

"Now heah is big woodses fuh you, Miss," said she, as they turned the corner near the Colony for the feeble minded, "an' dey is jes linded with wile beastes. Lawdy, Miss, jes listen! Can't you heah 'em howlin' an' showin' dey teef? An' look, please, mam, down dat great deep gully—dare is where de apes lives. Can't you heah 'em chatterin an' shakin' dey fistes at us?"

"Aint I e'er tole you 'bout de ape at de show what bite off de little girl's arm? Yas'm," she continued, without waiting for a reply, "she went to de show, an' she wuz standin' 'roun' lak she ne'er have saw nuffin' befo', an' an ole ape bite it bardacious off. But when ole ape found 'at de perlice wuz 'bout to git him, he stuck it on agin. Yas'm, he stuck it on wif 'lasses."

"Well, and could she use her arm after that? Was it just as good as ever?" asked Mrs. Gilmore.

"Oh, I don't know'm—I went on home after dat. When I foun' dey wuz scrappin' lak dat, I went on home. I knowd it wuzn't no place fuh me."

As she was finishing this story they turned into the open country, getting a fine view of wide fields and meadows for some distance. She stood up in the phaeton gazing in astonishment upon the scene. "Well, well, well!" she cried. "Uh-uh! Take keer fuh dis worl'! How much fur'er do we haf to go 'fore we gits to dat ole gent'mans' house what use to own my gran'papa an' my gran'-mama? Look away over yonder! Do we haf to go dat fuh befo' we gits dare? Hoopee! but where do de sky en'? Do we haf to go to de en' er de sky? An' look 'way over yonder!" pointing in another direction. "Ef we haf to go dat fuh we'll cert'ny git to de jumpin'-off place! My, but it do skeer me, thinkin' er drivin' off into de bottomless pit! I do hope 'at we'll git to ole gent'man Williams befo' we gits to de jumpin'-off place. Eli is long-haided, aint he' Miss?

Nothin' can't skeer him, I'm come to tell you. Won't you, please, ma'm, see how he turn 'roun' an' look at thin's on de roadsides. He look scornful at 'em, much as to say: You's a fool ef you think I is goin' to jump out er my skin at you; I has saw ole rocks an' stumps befo'.

"Well, de sky cert'ny is pretty an' hopeful look-in'! An' don't the sun shine straight down! Where do de clouds go when de sun is shinin out? Do dey hide behin' de blue sky, er do dey git under de earf when dey see de sun comin'?"

"I do trus' an' pray no harm won't happen to my mama while I'm out heah. But co'se dey won't, 'cause de perlice is in town, an' dat's dey business to keep harm from happenin'. I'm goin' to he'p my mama lots when I gits back from dis country. I'm goin' to take a Irish pertater an' shine up dem butcher-knives in dat kitchen, an' I'm goin' to see 'at no speck er black is on yo' carvin knife an' fork when dey goes in yo' dinin'-room to carve chicken an' ham. I wonder what we'll have fuh dinner in de country. Mama say 'at country people is death on chicken.

"Well, ef heah aint chickens an' ducks promernadin' up an' down de big road lack dey own it! Miss, I do b'lieve on my soul 'at country varments kin git 'bout as much enjoyments out er dis worl' as town varments—don't you think so? Dey seems to take charge er thin's out heah an' ac' as ef dey wuz de whole cheese. An' bless my life ef dey don't think dey owns up in de sky! Won't you, please, ma'm, look at dat tuckey-buzzard!" pointing to a large bird in the air, some distance

away. "Do you want to know ef yo' true love love you? Den you say: "Tuckey-buzzard, tuckey-buzzard, ef my true love love me, sail on; ef he don't, flop'."

Mrs. Gilmore did as directed, when she added: "Yas'm, yo' true-love love you—see how tuckey-buzzard sail on. Ef yo' true-love hadn't er love you, tuckey-buzzard would er ke'p a floppin'."

"Oh, but don't you know 'at birds mus' feel high-haided an' uppish when dey kin skin through de air lack dat! I know dey mus' feel deyse'ves 'bove country people, when dey kin soar way 'bove dey haids lack dat. Don't you know dey mus' think 'at dat ole man walkin' in dat fiel' is ve'y small pertaters? Do you reckon' people e'er will have wings an' fly through de air lack birds? Sis Hunter say dey will, when de blood er de Lamb done wash de miry clay er dis lowlan' soil from dey feet. She say dey will rise on de wings er de mornin' an' sing dey songs er praise. Do you know, Miss, I'd lack to be able to fly? I'd lack to glimpse dis worl', an' de people walkin' 'roun' on it, from de sky? Sis' Hunter say 'at mountain tops an' high places gives people grander views en lowlans'. Oh, but dis worl' is a fine place to live in, I think! An', Miss, from dis time for'-ards I'm goin' to be de ve'y bes' chile I kin. I'm goin' to min' my mama good, an' al'ays answer when she calls me, an' not make lack 'at ole Mr. and Mrs. Bumble-Bee an' ole Mr. an' Mrs. Blue Jay deafens me when I'm out in de yard. Heeps er times Satan an' bad angels says to me: 'You's deaf, chile. It's hot in de kitchen an' cool out



heah.' Den dey whispers easy to me: 'Didn't Gawd sen' de birds to sing to you? You oughter stay outdoors, so you kin glimpse 'em while dey is singin'.

"But, Miss, now comes ticklish times fuh us," as she perceived they were crossing the railroad track. Then, with a sigh of relief: "I'm mighty glad 'at dat ole railroad done wait tell we cross over 'fore it come rattlin' long an' run over us. We's travelin' some now! Ef we aint goin' to cross a creek on a bridge—an' I'll bet 'at it's Salt-Fork! Ole Eli thinks 'at it's he time to keep he eye skun. See how skeerd he is er dem little cracks in dis bridge. He can't see what keeps him from fallin' in dis creek. You better be thankful, horse, 'at dis isn't de bridge at de foot er dat big red hill on de Arrow Rock road, an' 'at we isn't crossin' it in de nighttimes; 'cause haints walks on dat bridge jes as soon as de sun goes down. Why, dey perades deyse'ves on dat bridge same as ef dey own it. But now he sees somethin' to 'track he 'tentions. He sees dat clover fiel'. See how he is rubber-neckin' at it! I'll bet 'at he wushes he wuz in dat fiel' dis minnit,' eatin' he dinner.

"Uh-uh! but ole Mr. Grasshopper is on time, as useyul eatin' hese'f a plenty. An' dem little chillun grasshoppers—dey's havin' dey time kurvortin' in dare. But, Miss, don't you know 'at dem little chillun grasshoppers give dey daddy somethin' to think 'bout sense he's been livin' down dare so close to dis creek. Dey werries dat ole gent'man no little. Yas'm, dey does. Why,

would you b'lieve it, Miss, dey is dat haidy 'at dey goes down to dat creek an' goes in swimmin'? Dey is so high an' mighty 'at dey think 'at ef dem little chillun' fish kin swim, dey sho aughter be able to try, anyhow. So, what do dey do but rund off one day when dey mama an' dey papa boaf done tole 'em not to go near dat creek. An' dey thunk 'at dey wuz a-swimmin' fine; but, as my gran'mama say, dey hides wouldn't hole shucks, when dey daddy go down dare an' yank 'em out er dat creek. He dress 'em up in style, I'm come to tell you, 'cause dey wuz jes ready fuh it. Dey cloze sho wuz cut in fashion when he got fruh wif 'em. He cut 'em up an' down, an' cross-ways an' roun' an' on de bias, an' dey have all de colors er de rainbow when he git fruh wif 'em. An', would you b'lieve it, Miss, dem little grasshopper chillun couldn't set down fuh a week wifout limpin! An', I tell you, it wuz a many a day 'fore dey try dat caper agin.

"Miss, did you know ole Mr. and Mrs. Grasshopper got married yuther day? Yas'm, dey got de cer'mony said over dem at las'. En don't you know 'at dem little boy en girl grasshoppers wuz awful proud when dey heyard dey mama en papa wuz goin' to git married. Dey wash dey little face en han's jes as clean, an' dey comb out dey little naps. De little boy grasshopper put on he little sailor suit, an' de little girl grasshopper put on her little white dress an' her pretty blue sash, an' dey sets up an' wuz actin' jes as nice; but don't you know 'at one er dem Stringtown grasshoppers,

what ain't got no envitation to dat weddin', looks in at de winder an' he say:

"'Hi, nobody needn't ever tell dem little boy an' girl grasshopper 'at dey mama an' papa never did git married, fuh dey is got front seats at de weddin' an' dey is goin' to recollect' it.'

"But, Lawdee, Miss, I has two creeks wif me, fuh Blackwater is runnin' down on one side er my face an' Salt Fork on de yuther. Did you ever heah er anybody swimmin' in sweat?"

The hint was sufficient. The horse was stopped, and the child was soon sheltered from the sun's rays. "Miss," said Ethey, when they had started again, "has you any idee who you an' me remin's me of? Why, Sis' Hunter an' her Miss Fannie, back in Furginia. You know, in ole times no high-up white lady could step her foot on de groun' by herse'f; an' ef she went ridin' in her phaeton, her little colored girl swungt on behin', ef dey wuz'nt no place fuh her to scrutch down on de inside. An' dat's all right, too—aint it, Miss?—fuh a little colored girl kin make herse'f mighty handy to a white lady when she is out ridin', 'cause, sides takin' keer er her, she kin jump out an' git flowers fuh her—dat is, when de sun don't shine too hot.

"But is we comin' to mo' big woodses? An' dey have plenty er wile beastes, too, I'll bet you! But I isn't skeerd er dem wile beastes, 'cause I know de country, an' my gran-mama was part Injun, an' ev'rybody knows 'at Injuns aint skeerd er no wile beastes what Gawd e'er is made. No'm,"

holding her head aloft, "ef ole Mr. Norey an' he whole ark-ful er wile beastes had er lit on de hillside, clost 'nough to dem Injuns, it would er been de las' er dem. Injuns 'fraid er wile beastes!" tossing her head disdainfully, and turning up her nose, "Why, dey don't min' 'em no mo' en a bref er win'. Dey know dat dey don't have nuffin to do but sen' a arrer straight to dey heart, an' dat is de las' er dem. Dat's what my gran'mama say, an' she oughter know fuh she is part Injun."

"Well, we have at last reached our destination," said Mrs. Gilmore, pointing to a neat white cottage on a hill near.

"An' Marse William live dare! Well, well, well! I cert'ny is glad, fuh I done heyard er dat ole gent'man, an' how jolly he laugh, fuh so long 'at I wuz mos 'fraid I might die 'fore I could set my eyes on him. An' dis is actyully where he live wif he fine daughter, what keeps house fuh him an' cook him dem fine dinners! Uh-uh! Look at dem peach trees an' de apple trees, an' all them yuther kin's er trees. Miss, don't you know 'at dey eats deyse'ves a plenty! An' dat big garden! Uh-uh! Take keer! But look, Miss, dey is comin' out er de house to meet us. Well, we sho is goin' to have a deception fuh once-t in our lives." In a few moments, the greetings over, Mrs. Gilmore and Ethey were in the house and Eli was quietly eating hay in the big barn.

## CHAPTER II

"But, mama," said Ethey to her mother the morning after this trip to the country, "maybe I didn't enjoy myse'f yistiddy out at dat ole gent'-man's house what use to own my gran-papa an' gran'mama! An' maybe I didn't enjoy myse'f on de way! Why, mama, I talked a blue streak to Miss all de way. Well, I jes had to talk. Do you know, 'at ef I hadn't kep' talkin' she would er fuhgit 'at I wuz in de hin' part er dat phaeton. I tole her mo' 'stonishin' tales."

"You better min', gal, how you tell Miss all dem big stories; terreckly she won't have one speck er use fuh you. She'll think you's de big-gis' story-teller in de country."

"Don't you be oneasy 'bout Miss; she understands me. She didn't say nuffin much, but she jes laugh all de time. She kep' her face turn away, an' she laugh easy to herse'f, but I could see she wuz laughin' by how her yeahs ris up. An' I reckon I would er melted an' turn to a grease spot on de hin' part er dat phaeton ef I hadn't er tole her 'at Blackwater wuz runnin' down on one side er my face an' Salt-Fork on de yuther. It's de Lawd's trouf, mama, ef I hadn't er streach dat blankit some she ne'er would er look 'roun' an' see how turble I wuz perspirin', an' took me on de inside de phaeton to-side her. An', mama, do you know 'at I wuzn't mo' en settin' up to-side her tell we met a turble onerry ole white man.

De way I know how onerry he wuz, wuz how scornful he look at me, settin' up in a white lady's phaeton to-side her. But, Lawdee! Miss ne'er keer no mo' 'bout what dat ole man thunk en ef he had er been a fly on de wall. She jes say to him, 'Good mornin',' and driv on. I tell you I has a turble lackin' fuh a high-haided white lady, 'specially when dey knows how to be high-haided to dey color.

"But, Lawdee, when we driv up to dat house we sho did raise a ruxion! De hens commensted to cacklin', de roosters to crowin', de dogs to barkin', an' terreckly dem white people rushed out dat house, an' dey all but tuck us in dey arms, dey wuz dat glad to see us. An' would you b'lieve it, mama, we wuzn't mo' en in de house tell de haidz wuz a fallin' off er chickens, de feathers wuz a flyin' in de air, an' terreckly chicken wuz fryin' in one skillet, an' ole ham in de yuther, an' de apple peelin's an' de tater peelin's wuz a-rollin' on de flo'. I sho wuz glad 'at we went, 'cause we make so much commotion."

"What all did you have fuh dinner?" asked the mother, as Ethey drew a long breath.

"Now you better ax me what we didn't have. But Marse William—what you reckon dat ole gent'man tole Miss? He say:

"'Yas, I use to own her gran'daddy an' gran'-mammy, an' Dick wuz de smartes' nigger an' de bigges liar 'at ever did go unhung. He could spin de bigges' yarns I e'er did heah.'

"When dat ole gent'man say dat, I wunk at Miss, an' when she laugh, I haf to ram my two

fistes down my froat to keep from sniglin' in white folks' house.

"But when we done et dat big dinner, an' dat gooseberry pie—now mama let me tell you 'bout dat great, big, fat colored boy out dare—black as a crow—what dey calls 'Pink.' When him an' me wuz eatin' our gooseberry pie, I cot him, out er de corner er my eye, laughin' 'cause I smack my mouf. Den I turn on him an' tell him 'at I know it aint up-to-da' to smack you mouf, but 'at gooseberry pie is so good 'at I jes haf to smack my mouf. He holler an' laugh, an' say: 'Now you's talkin'.'"

"Why, honey," said the mother, laughing, "you mus' try not leave yo' manners at home nex' time you goes out in comp'ny."

"Yas'm. But, mama, as I wuz goin' to tell you, when we done et dinner, I went up-stairs wif Miss Willie an' Miss to res'; but, Lawdee, when I look out at dat winder in Miss Willie's room dey wuzn't no res' fuh me, ef you calls layin' down an' goin' to sleep restin'. I didn't do nuffin but look at dat country. Why, I reckon de country is 'nough bigger en town! It wuz jes spread out ev'rywhere out dare. An' sky! Why, I n-e-v-e-r did see so much sky in all my lifetime! It wuz raised up over dat whole country lack a great big umbrella! Oh, mama, but I cert'ny did enjoy myse'f, an' I cert'ny wuz glad I wuz livin'. Miss ax me how I would lack to be de ole woman what haf to sweep de spidar webs from de sky; an', would you b'lieve it, mama, I never did know tell den 'at dat ole gent'man wuz dat high-haided

an' uppish 'at he spin he webs an' hitch 'em to de sky.

"But Beetown out in de country! Would you b'lieve it, mama, bees has a town out dare mos' as big as Marshall! Yas'm, an' dey has dey little houses painted white, wif little front do's to 'em. Dat ole black boy dey calls Pink, I has no use fuh him, 'cause, when I pint to dem little houses an' say to de white gent'man what's grindin' de ax, 'You has a lots er little workin' people what live in dem houses,' dat boy wunk at de white man an' say, 'Yas, go up an' knock at de front do' an' a little girl will come out an' play wif you; she's ve'y fon' er playin' wif tarballs.' I knowd what he meant, but I never let on. I say to myse'f, 'I may be dark, but you is mo' lack a tar-ball en me'; an' I turn 'way an' go to de duck pon' an' set down on a rock—an' ef it wuzn't fun to see dem little ducks stan' on dey haid in dat water an' kick up dey little heels in de air! An' I tell you now, mama, I didn't once-t turn my head toward dat nigger again. Do you know I wonders ev'ry day of my life what Gawd could er been thinkin' 'bout when he made de male sect? We oughter be able to run de worl' wifout dem. Dey don't half work. I can't see what use dey kin be to Gawd. Dey don't lack church, an' dey isn't nothin' but trouble-makers."

"Honey, you sho do take after yo' gran'mammy by not lackin de male sect. She say dey is mo' strainin' on grace en all de res' er de worl' put together."

"I don't know who I takes after, but I know



I could live wifout 'em. When Miss call me to come home, she open dat little box an' show me dem little white chickens, an' de young man dare say dey name is Mr. an' Mrs. Bryan. Den we started back home. We did have de beauteer-fulles' time drivin' home! De birds wuz singin' 'long de roadsides, an' de people wuz goin' to milkin', an' de little baby calves wuz callin' dey mamas—but take keer fuh dem lam's out in de country! Of all de switchin' er tails I e'er did see in my born days! I thought I have saw people switch, but dey wuzn't a circumstance to dem little ole lam's when dey wuz eatin' dey suppers. Miss stop Eli an' we mos' split our sides laughin' at 'em. I tole Miss 'at it look to me lack dey felt so tickled dey want to switch dey tails, but dey couldn't spare de time, so dey jes haf to wiggle 'em.

"All dis time now de sky was gittin' redder an' redder, an' de win' blowin' cooler an' cooler. I cert'ny did enjoy ev'ry step er de way, tell we got to dem big woodses back er de Feeble-Minded, where I spin Miss dem big yarns 'bout dem wile beastes. Den, so he'p me Lawdy, ef my heart wuzn't thumpin' right up in my froat, clare tell we drive upon de gate bridge, ready to come inside dis yard. I didn't know what Gawd might think er me fuh spinnin' Miss dem big yarns, but sholy dey isn't *nobody* but kin take a joke? 'Scuse me ef I wants to be so late a-yuther time comin' fruh dem big woodses! I didn't know what minnit dem wile beastes might grab me out er dat phaeton an' be crunchin' on my bones.

"But I sho is glad, now 'at de sun is shinin,' 'at I did git to see my gran'papa an' my gran'mama's ole Marster 'fore I die. An' I do wush 'at my gran'papa—ole gent'man Dick—had been livin' in my times. I cert'ny would enjoyed hearin' him talk."

"Yas, you would enjoyed hearin' him talk, all right, but I tell you now you wouldn't been 'lowed to git a word in aigeways."

"But, 'scuse me. mama, dis isn't gittin' my work done in de house. Miss'll think I sho done fuhgit myse'f. Dem pianer lags 'll be knee-deep in dus'.

"Well, Miss," said Ethey, as she entered the sitting-room, dust-cloth in hand, "I do hope 'at you won't think 'at dat trip to de country done 'moralize me, as Sis' Hunter say. Somehow my mama take sich a intruss hearin' 'bout my gran'papa an' my gran'mama's white people 'at I jes couldn't hardly tear myse'f away from her; an' I knowd dese ole pianer lags wuz needin' 'tention, too," kneeling and beginning to dust briskly a leg of the piano. "Wall, dis sho is a tight squeeze fuh me in heah behin' dis ole lag. I tell you, Miss, it's a fine thin' fuh me 'at I wait tell dis mornin', when I feels mo' slimmer, instid er yis-tiddy, when I done et dat big dinner, to tackle dis job. Now, jes wuzn't dat a fine day fuh us in de country!—an', Miss, I mus' tell you 'at I feels thankful fuh it.

"Town people have sich a way er thinkin' dey's de whole show; but ef dey heahs my racket, dey better go out in de country once-t to see how big dis worl' is. Lawdy, Miss, but dis worl' do keep

me busy! When I says to myse'f dey sholy isn't nuffin else to see, fuss thin' I know I run up ginst somethin' else to mirate about."

Then, after a moment, "Lookey, please, ma'm, now don't dat beat de beaters! Ole Mr. Spider thunk he'd git ahaid er you an' me. Would you b'lieve it, de ole rascal done rund in dis house de minnit we drive out er dis yard yistiddy, an' done buil' hese'f a fine house way back heah behin' dis pianer, where he thunk I won't fin' him. Didn't he have his nerve wif him, Miss? I can't he'p from laughin' at him to save my soul," holding her hand over her mouth, "he do try so hard to be up-to-da'. Please, ma'am, see dis long hall to he house. Dat leads down to he dining'-room. Now, jes aint he high-haided, settin' up in dare so scornful lookin'? But don't you come too close to him," as Mrs. Gilmore leaned over the piano trying to see Mr. Spider's fine house; "you's strange to him, you know. But he aint got no fine parlor—he 'tends lack he have, but he haven't. Spiders is great braggers.

"Miss, did you e'er heah 'bout de time 'at little ole Mrs. Fly got in trouble fuh swallerin' all er dat ole Mr. Spider's big talk? Oh, he did spin big yarns! An' he spin 'em to harm people, too. He kep' a braggin' on he fine parlor; he tole little ole Mrs. Fly 'at she aint ever seed nuffin lack it—'at it wuz jes awful fine an' swell. Den he say to her, jes as perlite as he kin: 'Won't you come walk up in my fine parlor an' res' youse'f a minnit?' Little ole Mrs. Fly, she think a lot 'bout style, so she stick up her haid in de air, an' she goes strut-

tin' on in; but ole Mr. Spider don't do nuffin' but wrap he rope tight 'roun' her an' hang her up on de wall, an' kill her, an' skun her, an' et her fuh he supper. Now, ole Mrs. Fly might er knowd 'at ole Mr. Spider ne'er have no fine parlor when she heah him braggin' 'bout it so. Pete say 'at he reckin' ole Mrs. Fly ruther be out er de worl' en out er style, an' she sho got her ruthers dat time. But do you know what make dat ole rascal buil' he house out-er-doors sometimes?"

"Yes, so he can see all the flies in the air and invite them into his house."

"Well," said Ethey, "dat is one reason, but not he onlies' reason. Now I know 'at you will laugh, but he do it so 'at dem little jew-draps kin fall on it, an' den he make out 'at dem little jew-draps is he lookin'-glasses, an' he stan's 'fore 'em an' paints he cheeks, an' primps hese'f worsen en any ole maid. But I know one thin'—little ole Mrs. Fly's brothers an' sisters got ahaid er him fuh killin' dey sister. An' I'll tell you how come it," rolling her eyes and twisting a corner of the dust-cloth. "You see, one day a lot er Mrs. Fly's brothers an' sisters wuz goin' 'long, an' dey sees ole Mr. Spider practicin' on he terpeeze. Yas'm, Mrs. Fly's brothers an' sisters wuz a comin' from church, an' dey thought 'at it would be a good time to kill ole Mr. Spider, 'cause dey knows he ne'er have no business practicin' on de terpeeze on Sunday; so dey stan' still an' commensted to brag on ole Mr. Spider. You see, dey 'tend lack 'at dey done fuhgit all 'bout Mr. Spider done kill dey sister; so dey all stan' still an' brag an' brag

on ole Mr. Spider. Flies kin use flatterin' talk jes de same as spiders, an' don't you fuhgit it. Dey say 'at he sho wuz a fine reformer, 'at he wuz as light on he feet as a young boy, an' he wuz as action as a cat. All dis turn ole Mr. Spider's haid, so 'at he lose all de little sense what he e'er did have. Well, he kep' a swingin' closter an' closter to dem flies; he wuz so 'fraid 'at he would miss some er dey flatterin' talk. Well, you see, one little ole fly done pick up a piece er stove-wood on de sly—yas'm, flies has stove-wood jes de same as people. Don't you think 'at flies tries to freeze deyse'ves any mo' en yuther folks does. Well, ole Mr. Spider kep' a swingin' closter an' closter, an' jes as soon as he got clost 'nough, Mr. Fly knock him in de haid, an' all dem yuther brothers an' sisters jumps on him an' stomp him to deaf.

"But dat spider show! Would you b'lieve it, Miss, spiders is so high-haided 'at dey even have to have dey own shows an' circuses, an' dey is fine. Dey doesn't have to jine white folks' circus, neither. Spiders has dey own circuses, an' don't you fuhgit it. Yas'm, spiders has dey lady rope-walkers, an' dey terpeeze reformers, an' dey bare-back riders, an' dey charret-racers. Didn't I tell you 'at ole Mr. Spider try to be up-to-da'? But dey horses—dem spider's charret horses! Dey sho wuz a caution. Now, Miss, I know you will laugh when I tell you 'at ole Mr. Spider have to work tumblin' bugs to he charrets. He wuz goin' to hitch up ole Mr. and Mrs. Grasshopper, but ole Mr. Grasshopper tole him plank out 'at he

would spit anbeer in he eye ef he fool wif dem. Den ole Mr. Spider tole him 'at he wuzn't anxious to work a bandy-shank grasshopper no-how, 'cause dey work dey lags so lack dey wuz string-haltered."

"I would like so much to attend a spider circus," said Mrs. Gilmore eagerly.

"Yas'm, but, den, you know dey is rank pizen, an' dey might git mad at you an' try to bite you to deaf ef you wuz to go to dey circus. I don't b'lieve 'at dey would want white folks rubber-neckin' 'roun' dey reformans. You see, dey might think 'at dey done come to make fun. I ne'er is heyard ole Mr. Spider say so, but I'd be 'fraid 'at he might not lack it."

She said no more for some time, but worked industriously until she had finished dusting. Then, as she seated herself on an ottoman in the corner, she said: "Now, Miss, I done set all dis furniture to shinin'; won't you, please, ma'm, tell me a story? It seems to me a coon's age since you tole me any."

Mrs. Gilmore asked if she had ever heard the story of the Crucifixion, and how God had sent down his Son to be crucified, that all might go to heaven when they died.

She replied that she had never heard it. The lady then tried to tell her in such language as she could understand how God had sent down His Son, that He might grow up and be crucified, be killed, nailed to the cross until He was dead, that all might go to heaven when they died. When this point was reached, Ethey began to pat her foot and to turn her head from side to side, bat-

ting her eyes and now and then throwing incredulous glances at her mistress. When Mrs. Gilmore asked her what she thought of it, she said: "That's mighty funny! I wouldn't er thought 'at Gawd would er done it! Then, after a moment's thought:

"How big wuz he?"

When told that he was a little baby, she asked quickly: "How did Gawd sen' him down? Who did He sen' him down by? Did He drap him down lack He do us?"

"Yes."

"Miss, did Gawd have any yuther chilluns?"

"No."

She stood still, as though doubting the whole story; then, moving nearer, asked eagerly:

"Miss, did Gawd have a wife?"

"No."

Her face lighted up, and with the greatest look of relief she said, shaking her finger at the lady, "I knowd He mustn't er! She would er made a turble racket 'bout dat."

As she was turning away, looking through the window, she said: "Dare goes po' Sis' Hunter—Aunt Vesta, as you call her. I reckon' she is still on de track er dat pension. It do make her so much trouble, an' yuther day, when she wuz goin' up town, a black cat cross de road in front er her, an' she is 'fraid it means bad luck to her. Mama say 'at I may go to see her dis evenin', but she say 'at I musn't be specktin' to be too highly entertained, 'cause she have so many werryments on her min' sense her husban' is daid.

"Uh-uh! but heah comes a lady caller—I do b'lieve 'at she is one er dem book agents. Well, she'll have somethin' to say. I know I has to shet up now. Mama say I mus' be as still as a mouse when comp'ny is in de house. I'll go tell her to 'entrez,' an' den I'll scrutch down heah in de corner an' 'tend lack I is a mouse, so I can't speak a word tell dat white lady go home."

As Ethey opened the front door for the book agent at the expiration of her call, she saw Pete in the yard cutting plantain, and quietly slipped out.

Soon after, Pete came into Mrs. Gilmore's room, pushing Ethey before him by now and then giving her a shove by the shoulders. She was making but slight resistance and had rather an amused expression on her face.

"Miss," said he indignantly, as he placed her in front of Mrs. Gilmore, "you ought to make Ethey's mama whup her fuh tellin' sich awful big stories. Here she's been out in de yard tellin' me 'bout de fishes' house an' de snakes' house 'at she seed when she look down in de riber. She say 'at Mr. Fish's house got carpet on de flo', an' cheers, an' table, an' pianer, an' she say Mr. Fish's wife dress herse'f up in silk an' satin. Wouldn't you lack to see a fish dressed up in silk an' satin, playin' on de pianer? An' she say 'at Mr. Snake's wife wears de fines' hats, trimmed in de pretties' ribbins an' flowers, an' little girl snake dress herse'f in blue mother-hubbards an' tie her hair wif ribbins. Who e'er did see snakes wif hats on? An' what would a snake look lack, crawlin' 'roun'



wif a mother-hubbard on? You ought to make her mama whup her, fuh ef she tell sich turble stories now, what will she do when she gits big? She knows well 'nough 'at she is tellin' big stories."

"Tell him that they are only fairy tales," suggested Mrs. Gilmore to Ethey, who stood looking sullenly at Pete. But the latter continued to enumerate her high crimes and misdemeanors:

"She knows 'at she aint ne'er seed no fish's house, fuh she aint e'er seed no ribber in her life."

"Yas, I is seed a ribber, too," said she emphatically.

"Where, I'd lack to know?"

"When I cross o'er Blackwater on de bridge, goin' to Sedalia, I look down in de ribber, an' I seed fish's house den. Yas, I is seed fish's house, an' you can't make me b'lieve I isn't, fuh I is." Giving him a look of defiance, she placed herself in the corner, holding her head erect. She seemed fully satisfied that Mrs. Gilmore understood her, and that was enough. When Pete left the room, she said:

"Miss, do you know 'at I hates to make 'scuses to anybody as ign'ant as Pete?"

In the afternoon, Aunt Vesta was sitting on her porch with her mending when Ethey and her doll went in to make the promised visit. "Well, honey, I cert'ny is glad to see you," said she as the child went up to the porch. "How is you today?"

"I's tarble, all but my cough. I do b'lieve 'at

"I's tarble, all by my cough. I do b'lieve 'at dis ole cough must er been sent on me fuh a jedg-

ment, 'cause I al'ays did scorn anybody so wif a cough. I ne'er could bear to heah people cough, 'cause I wuzn't raised up dat way. Why, back in Furginia ef a little colored chile had er cough out loud, dey'd er been sent out er dat house too quick. An' sneeze? Why' ef we hadn't er smothered dat sneeze, we'd been sent out dat house in a minnit. Dey'd er jes pint at de do', an' we'd onderstan'. An' stan' an' star at anybody? Why, we'd no mo' do dat en we'd fly! We'd jes haf to glimpse people from de corners er our eyes. An' speak up an' talk when ole people wuz talkin'? Dey'd jes pint at de corner an' say, 'Be seen an' not heyard,' an' dat would settle us fuh all day."

"But, Sis' Hunter, don't you think it mus' er been kinder pitterful fuh dem little chilluns, way back in Furginia, not to be 'lowed no idees er dey own in dey haid, an' not be 'lowed to 'spress none er dey thoughts?"

"Well, honey, we use to think so; but, den, it must er been fuh de best, fuh you know dey wuz so many little colored chillun back in Furginia, buzzin' 'roun' lack so many flies, dey might er all tried to 'spress dey thoughts at de same time, an dat sho would er made a bedlam."

"Well," said Ethey laughing, "I done got my wush anyhow, Sis' Hunter. I foun' a pin wif de pint to me comin' down heah, an' I pin it in my lef' han' shoulder an' say to myse'f: 'I wush, when I gits to Sis' Hunter's 'at she'll lead off de conversation 'bout when she wuz little an' live way back

in Furginia.' An' ef you aint done done it sho 'nough!"

"Now, aint dat natchul pickin' up a lucky pin!" said Aunt Vesta, folding her hands in her lap and smiling at the child.

"Yas'm, an' me an' my doll have a good deal er enjoymment on de way comin' heah. We sawd a white lady mos' shake de haid off her little girl 'cause she bresh de kitten's teef wif her papa's toofbresh. An' when we got to Mr. Johnson's, he wuz sittin' in de yard playin' a fine dancin' tune on de fiddle, an' me an' my doll stepped it off lively on de sidewalk fuh a while. Dat's when my wush pin drap out, an' dat's how come I know my wush would be sho to come true. Yas'm, we addamanted lef', an' swungt on de corners, an' all promernaded tell we wuz plum out er bref. Mr. Johnson laugh tell he mos' fell out er he cheer at me an' my doll; but we couldn't efford fuh all dat good music to git wasted fuh any enjoymment he might git out er laughin' at us.

"An', Sis' Hunter, you an' dem yuther little colored chillun way back in Furginia—how did you pass away yo' time anyhow, please, ma'm?"

"Lawdy, honey, ef you gits me strung out on Furginia I'll talk you to death. I know I could talk a book full 'bout Furginia; fuh, somehow, when my min' gits started on Furginia it could ramble on fuhever."

"Well, I tell you now, Sis' Hunter, you kin talk a book big as de dictionary full, an' I'll ne'er tell you to stop."

"Well, let me see," said Aunt Vesta, examining a patch on an apron she had been mending, "we'd have var'us ways er passin' off de times. One thing, we'd have our chores to do. Mondays we'd pack washin' water from de spring—de name of de spring wuz Soloman's Spring, an' it come from de root of a great big white oak tree. Me an' Rose an' Harris would have our little buckets to pack water in, an' we'd haf to fill de barrels, so dey'd be ready fuh wash-day—Tuesday wuz wash-day. An' co'se, lack chillun in dese days, we'd haf to play 'roun' de branch 'fore we'd git de water. We'd look fuh mushel shells up an' down de branch. An' somehow it al'ays seems to us 'at de further we'd go from de spring de prettier an' de plentyfuler de mushel shells would be. Den, co'se, we'd haf to hurry, fuh dey timed us up at de house. We'd run so fas' 'at our buckets wouldn't be mo' en haf full er water; but we learn a trick 'at would make it soun' lack a heep. We'd hold de bucket up high an' make de water come down—*collush*—in de barrel. Den we'd holler, 'W-a-t-e-r, Miss!' Dat wuz de way we haf to report to 'em, so 'at dey would know when we'd git back. De white ladies would be in de house enjoyin' deyselves, an' co'se we knowd dey wouldn't come out dare to see how much water we have in de buckets.

"Den Tuesdays we haf to git chips an' bark an' dry bresh to heat de washin' water. Law, I has to laugh ev'ry time I thinks er my ole gran'mammy. She use to have her ole black bottle, an' sometimes she'd fix up a little toddy fuh us

little colored chillun, an' den she'd give us a big hamper basket an' we'd haf to fill it with chips. Oh, my, how lively we would work! When we git all de chips we could fin', den we'd haf to go git bark an' dry bresh. Why, we'd travel all 'roun' dat place pullin' bark off de staked an' rid-ered fences. We don't have any dem kinder fences in dese days. Dey's ole-fogy fences.

"When we'd git our chores done, den we'd play 'lady come and see,' an' I'd have de tuckey-house fuh my house an' Rose would have de goose-house fuh her house. We'd sweep 'em out jes as clean an' nice—den er all de high-haided, fine ladies you ever did heah tell er, Rose an' me would be 'em.

"I'll bet you would, Sis' Hunter!" exclaimed Ethey enthusiastically.

"Rose would be Mrs. Dick Smith, a rich white lady 'at lived on a hill close to us, an' I'd be Mrs. Cunnin Gains, a high-learnt, rich white lady 'at lived on a yuther hill close to us. I'd have a big ole tin waiter fuh my pianer—I'd set it on two chunks er wood—an' I'd be singin' an' playin' on de pianer when Mrs. Dick Smith would come to call on me. When I'd heah her knock at de do', I'd look up in de tuckey-house an' say: 'Dinah! Go dis minnit an' open de do'.' An' when Mrs. Dick Smith would come in, I'd say, 'T's mighty glad to see you. Take a cheer, an' res' yo' bonnet.'

"Den after we done talk a while 'bout our servants—each one would try to tell de biggis' tale 'bout how bad our servants wuz—she'd ask

me to play, an' I'd play de 'Swan'—dat wuz a great piece in dem days. Den we'd go to Richmon'. Harris would be our coachman. We'd have a box with two boards on it fuh our carr'age, two sticks of stove-wood fuh horses laid down in front of it, an' Rose an' me would set on de back seat an' Harris on de front an' drive, an' we'd cross over rivers, an' drive 'long mountain sides, an' we'd git mo' enjoyment out er dat ole box an' dem two sticks er stove-wood en ef dey had been a coach an' fo'."

"I'll bet 'at you would, Sis' Hunter. Now don't you know, Sis' Hunter, ef you an' me had been little at de same time 'at we would er had one er dem onlies' times playin' together? An' you have dolls to play wif, co'se?"

"Yas, endedd we did, chile. We use to go git young corn on de cob, an' take off de shucks an' make dolls out er 'em. We'd leave on de corn-silks fuh hair, an' we bresh dem little corn-silks, an' trot dem little corn-cobs same as ef dey had er been sho 'nough chillun. We use to wear acorn shells fuh thimbles, an' we'd thump our nurses haid's wif dem acorn thimbles. We'd say to our nurse, 'Don't you heah dat chile cryin'? Come heah dis minnit!' an' thump, thump we'd take 'em on de haid. Den we'd say, 'Now, you take dat chile an' walk it, an' don't you let me heah no mo' from it.'

"An' when any er our white folks kin would come to see 'em, an' bring dey little chillun, we'd haf to put on our clean dresses an' aprons an' follow 'em ev'ry step dey'd take."

"Well, you could git enjoyment out er dat, couldn't you, Sis' Hunter?—dat is, ef dey wuz *nice* white chillun?"

"Ef dey wuz *nice* white chillun?" replied Aunt Vesta, looking both surprised and amused at the child. "Hush yo' mouf, gal! You don't know what you talkin' 'bout. Co'se dey wuz *nice* white chillun. All er Furginia people's kin wuz nice. Why, dey jes *haf* to be nice, whe'er dey wuz er not.

"But, Lawdy, honey, in cider-makin' times, ef we little chillun didn't have de time er our lives! We use to go out to de cider-press an' drink cider. We'd drink tell we'd look jes lack little ticks, we'd be so full. Why, we'd be almos' drunk, an' dey would haf to whup us away from dat cider-press. I do know 'at de apples in my ole Marster's orchard wuz de fines' apples in de worl'. He have so many kin's. I can't neah recollect' de names er all er 'em. He have de King Tom apple, de pippin an' wine-saps—I aint ever seed any apples 'at taste lack 'em. An' de garden on my ole Marster's place! Honey, de beauterfullis' flowers—whole hedges er yellor jessamin'! An' we have hyacint's an' callacanters. Why, chile, ef I wuz to talk all night I couldn't tell you half what we have at my ole Marster's. Po' dear ole Marster! He was a fine ole gent'man, too, an' he call us Colonel Street's free niggers, 'cause he say we's so spilt. An' when my ole Marster died I grieved so for him 'at Miss Fannie say: 'Yas, Vesta shall have mournin' on too, 'cause she grieve so,' an' she made me a little black calico josey.

"I thought so much 'bout my ole Marster, an' grieve so fuh him, 'at I acyully saw his speret—yas, chile, I did. He wuz out walkin' by de barn, an' he have his han's behin' him, under his blue broadcloth coat trimmed in brass buttons. When I saw him, I holler an' say: 'Dare is ole Marster! Dare is ole Marster!' De white folks say 'at I done grieve 'bout him so is why I 'maged I saw him. But I know I saw him—he wuz too natchul lookin'. He even have on his white beaver hat."

"Lawdee, Sis' Hunter! Did you sho 'nough see his speret? What in de name er goodness did you do?"

"Why, nothin', chile. I wuzn't 'fraid er my ole Marster. He wuz always good to me."

"Yas, I know, when he wuz livin'. Ef it had er been me, an' his hant had er come 'roun' me, I sho would er skip dat country. I wouldn't er waited to git sole down Souf."

"Dat wuzn't nothin', chile, to time de stars fell."

"Now, I do hope, Sis' Hunter, de stars never did fall in Furginia? Well, Furginia sho is mo' 'stonishin en e'er I thought it wuz."

"Well no, honey, dey never sho' 'nough fall—I know now dey didn't, but ev'rybody thought dey wuz fallin'. De sky wuz red as fire an' look lack great sparks er fire fallin' from de sky. Somebody at de Quarters saw it fuss, an' dey comensted to holler, 'De stars is fallin'! De stars is fallin'!' Den de colored people all rush out de cabins hollerin' an' flourishin' dey arms in de air an' callin' ole Marster—dat wuz befo' ole Mars-



ter died—an' sayin', 'O Lawd, have mussy on my po' sinful soul!' Den dey drap down on dey knees, chile, an' er all de prayin', dey done it! An' it wuz 'nough to make people pray when de whole fermament seem to look like it was on fire, an' de sparks fallin' down to set de worl' on fire."

"Upon my soul an' body, Sis' Hunter, ef jes hearin' tell er dem stars fallin' don't make my blood run col'! What could it er been? Wuz it fireworks?" Then, as Aunt Vesta looked surprised, Ethey added, "It may er been. Dey may er had fireworks up in de sky—who knows? Wuz it Fourth of July?"

"Well, now, honey," said Aunt Vesta, laughing, "it may er been fireworks up in de sky. I don't know ef it wuz Fourth er July er fourth er Augus', but dey cert'ny wuz fireworks, all right. Now, it might er been fourth er Augus', an' dey may er been celebratin' freedom, fuh all I knows."

"Fourth er Augus' is my birthday," said Ethey, smiling and making herself appear several inches taller by sitting very erect in her chair. Aunt Vesta, looking over her glasses, exclaimed:

"Lawdy, chile, wuz you born on Mancerpation Day? Why, honey, do you know 'at it may be a sign from heaven fuh you to be born on Mancerpation Day. Ef de good Lawd took de pains to pick out Mancerpation Day fuh yo' birth-day, He mus' be 'spectin' some extras from you. Why, chile, you may be goin' to be somethin' onusyal an' gran'! You may be goin' to be a colored poet. We have already one gran' colored poet. You

mus' cultivate a wise an' prayerful speret, chile, an' be good, an' have de very bes' actions an' day-meaners you kin."

"I'll soon be six, you know, Sis' Hunter, an' I intends to start to school de very fuss day school commenstes."

"Dat's right, honey. I know you'll take to learnin', 'cause you want to know ev'rything dey is to know. Now, white people he'ps colored people when they's in earnes' 'bout learnin', an' ef you is sent as a sign from heaven to deliver yo' nation from de bonds er ig'nance—why, you may be sent to be a high up school-teacher."

"I wants to be a school-teacher," said Ethey, timidly, "dat is, ef I kin git high learnt 'nough. But I don't know 'bout teachin' colored school—little colored chillun is so outdacious."

"Well, I hope you don't want to teach white school, do you, chile?"

"No'm, I don't know as I does, but you say I mus' keep a prayerful speret an' write poetry. Now, what kinder speret would I have time I git fruh wif dem little imps er Satan what's so fond er stickin' out dey moufs at me an' sayin':

"'Yas she thinks she's white! Well, ef she'll jes keep thinkin' she's white, she'll be white'."

"Now, honey, I know 'at our color is very strainin' on grace; but we mus' learn to bear with 'em. I knows 'at ef I had er had de chance to git aigercation 'at colored people in dese days have, I'd er been a school-teacher. Now, my husban' could read real good in his Bible an' hymn-book an' almanac."

"Well, he muster been high learnt, Sis' Hunter."

"Yas, he wuz high learnt fuh colored, but not fuh white."

"Well, he could read well 'nough to give you somethin' to mirate 'bout, couldn't he, Sis Hunter?"

"He use to read out de Scriptures; but Paul wuz his favrite, an' he use to love to read to me about how wives ought to live in subjection to dey husban's. I use to mirate bout dat, fuh I couldn't onderstan' why de Scriptures hol' sich a tight rein on de wives an' give de husban's so much rope. People use to say 'at I spoil my ole man, but, den, I isn't sorry now," said Aunt Vesta with a sigh, "'cause, somehow, a man what never did git no special 'tentions an' waitin' on from his wife always looked pitterful to me. He seem so lack a orphan chile. You know, after my ole man got hurt by dat horse he couldn't stan' work, so he use to spen' most er his time readin'. When I'd git his dinner ready, I'd go an' envite him out, an' he'd go an' eat his dinner, compliment my cookin' sometimes, an' den he'd go on back to readin' his Bible an' hymn-book an' almanac. I hope, Ethey, you isn't tired er my ramblin' talk. I tries not to worry you wif my griefs an' tribulations, 'cause little chillun don't know nuthin' 'bout de trials er grown people."

"Oh, but I has had trials an' triberlations, Sis' Hunter. Didn't I see my papa mos' cut my mama's eye out, right in big meetin' too, when ev'rybody wuz singin' an' shoutin' an' sayin'

'Amen'? You know, dat's how come she leave him an' git dat 'vorce."

"Yas, honey, I knows 'bout it; but dat werryment is past, so don't you keep it wif you."

"An' when my color snurl up dey nose at me ev'ry time dey sees me, dat he'ps to keep de werryments wif me. Dare is dem little colored chillun—Lilly, Jennyvee an' Sadie. When I's good to 'em an' lets 'em play wif my dolls an' toys, dey steals 'em jes to spite me. Yas'm, dey is dat sneekin', an' sly. Now dis is how dey does me. One er 'em will look out at de winder an' say: 'Name er Gawd, look at Mrs. Squirrel! Ef she aint walkin' up her stairs holdin' on to Mr. Rabbit's arm!' Den, when I runs to de winder to look out, one er 'em steals somethin', an' maybe I doesn't miss it tell dey done went on home."

"Lawdy, honey, aint dat natchul to dis lowlan' soil? But don't you let dat werry you. You'll always have plenty er things to git enjoyment out er. An' don't you werry 'bout people not lackin' you. Nothin' an' nobody don't git de credit dey deserves in dis worl'. Now dare is de little dew-draps what comes from heaven to freshen an' baptize de flowers an' grass. Dey don't git no consideration from people. Dey look at de flowers an' walk on de grass, an' don't stop to give a thought to de little dew-draps."

"I does, Sis' Hunter! Endeed I does, fuh jes dis mornin', when I wuz talkin' to de little blue fuhgitsmenots by de front porch, I glimpsed a whole lot er little dew-draps shinin' on dem little flowers, an' I say to 'em: 'I's much bleegeed to you,

little Miss Dew-drops, fuh washin' my little flowers' faces so nice an' clean'."

"Dat's right, honey! Don't you e'er fuhgit to express yo' thankfulness in words as well as deeds. An' when you goes back home, I wants you to carry words er thankfulness from me fuh dis little visit; fuh you cert'n'y have brought down de dew-drops from heaven, an' baptize my speret with joy. De well-springs of my heart is open, an' even de sunshine done tuck on mo' brightness sense you come. We ought never to allow no blackness on de blue sky of our Christian firm'ment.

"But how is yo baby's health, Mrs. —

"I'm Mrs. Mowin," replied Ethey, with dignity.

"Yas, excuse me fuh fuhgittin'. How is yo' baby's health this hot weather, Mrs. Mowin?"

"It's tarble, thank you, ma'm, all but 'ceptin' de bumblebee sting on de jaw. She seem to have no aigercation 'tall 'bout what kinder varments she kin pick up."

"Well, ef she's been pickin' up bumblebees, she done gragerated an' got her dayplumyer in bumblebees, aint she, honey?"

"I think she have, fuh she ain't goin' to fuhgit it soon. I put soda-water on it an' it's lots better. Well, Sis' Hunter, I 'spect I better be goin'. Mama tole me not to wear my welcome out."

"No danger, honey," said Aunt Vesta, as she arose to walk to the gate with Ethey. "Now you kin know 'at de latch-string is always out heah, an' you'll always find a hearty welcome."

"But, please, ma'm, Sis' Hunter, look! Ef

dare isn't little Miss Hummin' Bird sippin' de honey er yo' flowers, an' she seem to think 'at she is very welcome, too."

"An' she is, chile."

"Now, Sis' Hunter, do you know why Gawd make little Miss Hummin' Bird's mouf so long?"

"Why, I don't believe 'at I do, ef it wuz to save my soul. Has you any idee, chile?"

"Yas'm, He make it long so 'at she kin reach way down in dem deep flowers an' git all de honey from little ole Mrs. Bumble-Bee; Gawd have it in fuh ole Mrs. Bumble-Bee, 'cause she's so mean to colored people. She would sting all de colored people on dis earf to deaf ef she could."

"An' is dat so? Well, Gawd sho is good! Come to see me, honey, when e'er yo' mammy 'lows you. You's a great deal er company to me an' a great consolation."

"Uh-uh! Take keer fuh dat chile!" said Aunt Vesta to herself, as she leaned on the gate watching the retreating figure moving slowly up the street, stopping now and then to observe a shrub, or flowers in a yard as she passed.

"Gawd have it in fuh Mrs. Bumble-Bee, 'cause she's so mean to colored people! Ef dat chile don't fill me with wonderment ev'ry time I lay my eyes on her. Po' little thing can't he'p havin'. Gawd take a intrust in her people, even ef dey don't 'preciate her. Well, I do hope 'at she'll live to grow up an' fulfill all her high aims; fuh she cert'n'y is a very uncommon chile."

### CHAPTER III

Aunt Vesta had come up to wash the windows and help Malinda get rid of the dust in the house. "The rain an' mud in the street," as she expressed it, "didn't give people much excuse fuh dusty, speckled winders." She had just come in with the water, cloths and pans, and was preparing to begin on the hall windows. "I jes do know," said she, as she stood near the door, looking out on the porch, "Susan B. Ant'ny is de happies' little chicken 'at I e'er did see. She do try her bes' to be corntented an' happy. An' dat ole tom-cat don et up all her little brothers an' sisters! I heyard her cherpin' out on de porch, an' I thought 'at she have done foun' a bug er a fly, but she wuz jes talkin' to a little streak er sunshine an' tryin' to warm her little feet in it. Do you know, Miss," turning to Mrs. Gilmore, who sat near, "'at it jes takes a little thin' lack dat to show me 'at I aint near cross-bearin' an' happy lack I ought to be? It jes takes a little chicken, er a little flower sometimes, to rebuke me an tell me how happy I ought to be fuh sunshine an' rain, let 'lone friends to give me work to do, an' pay me wages so 'at I won't have to be beholdin' to nobody."

Aunt Vesta was a widow, having lost her husband a few weeks before. She was a native of Virginia, possessing many of the characteristics

of Virginians, among them, pride in her native State and the social position of her "white folks." She had come to Missouri by way of Louisiana, having been sold "down South" on account of the reverses of her master's family. She never lost an opportunity of telling that she had not been sold on account of any "misdameanyers" or bad conduct on her part, and twenty years' acquaintance with Aunt Vesta proved the truth of her assertion. When she referred to her condition, Mrs. Gilmore asked her if she had been successful in securing her pension.

"Oh, dat ole werrisome pension! I is sorry 'noug h'at I e'er is tried to git it. Dat ole lawyer don't talk 'bout nothin' but ev'dence—ev'dence—ev'dence! Now, you know 'at my husban' wuz a ole soldier, an' 'at I has his cap an' coat, an' even de gun what he pack all de time 'at he wuz fightin' fuh his freedom. Dat coat an' cap an' gun, seems to me, ought to be mighty good ev'dence, an' I tole dat lawyer I could show 'em to him, an' 'at he could write an' tell dem people in Washington City 'bout 'em, an' ef dey didn't believe him, he could take my preacher's testament an' sen' dat to 'em; but he mos' tuck my haid off—you know how crabbit he is—an' he say:

" 'Dat is no ev'dence! You has to fuss git de ev'dence 'at you is his widder.'

" 'My good Lawd! I say to him, 'how kin I he'p bein' his widder when he is daid? I thought 'at when a woman's husban' wuz daid, she wuz jes boun' to be his widder.'



"Den he say, crabbiter en ever:

" 'You jes has to perduce de ev'dence 'at you is done been married to him.'

" 'My Lawd in heaven!' I say to him, 'I hope 'at you doesn't think 'at I's jes done tuck up wif my husban'! Why,' say I, 'I has pieces er my weddin' dress, an' my second day's dress, too, an' I kin show 'em to you.' An', I say: 'Why, didn't I come a bride to Glasgow, right across de riber from heah, an' dey is people dare what recollect's me a bride, an' my blue silk second day's dress, too!'

"Den he snap at me agin, an' say:

" 'Dat is no evidence! You has got to git witnesses fuh all dis; you has to git people down Souf 'at saw you married to swear to it.'

" 'My Lawd!' I say to him, 'dey maybe all daid, fuh all 'at I know! I isn't heyard from any er 'em fuh a long time.' But I give him some names an' he writ to 'em. I don't know how it will come out yit. Now, you can't blame me fuh gittin' worried wif all dat, fuh I sho wuz ensult'd."

Mrs. Gilmore tried to explain to her that no insult was intended, but that the law was strict to prevent fraud; but she insisted that she could not help feeling "ensulted anyhow."

"O Lawd, but don't I recollect' my trials an' vexations er speret when I fust come to Missouri! An' dat blue silk second day's dress, an' de werry-someness er it! An' oh, how my husban's kin-folks did hate me, 'cause I have dat blue silk an' hold a high haid. An' do you know, Miss, 'at

I ne'er would er got religion ef my husban's kinsfolks hadn't hated me so? Well, I reckon I wuz high-haided an' uppish, an', den, oft'ntimes I have a scornful speret.

"But don't I recollect' how I used to sweep up dat church wif de trail er dat blue silk dress! Yas'm, you know I didn't have no sense. If I had er had, I would er walked humble lack up dat church aisle, holdin' my trail keerful to one side, so as not to disturb de medertations er de congeration. But no, dat wuzn't me! I drap dat trail de minnit I got inside dat church, an' de trail has er deep facin' er crinoline on it, and dat make it stan' out still mo'. An' den, you know, I'd give myse'f a few extra switches an' flourishes, to make de silk rustle mo'. An' when de people would look 'roun' at me, I'd hole my haid higher an' higher, an' when some er de people would look mad at me, dat would jes tickle me, 'cause I knowd 'at dey wuz jealous er dat rustlin' silk.

"But let me tell you right heah, Miss, 'at folks has got mighty little to do when dey goes to tryin' to make yuther people jealous, fuh my airs an' uppishness turns all my color in dat town 'ginst me. An' dey say 'at dey doesn't blame my husband's kinfolks fuh not lackin' me. Den my husban', he ne'er have a bit mo' sense en me, an' he'd feel awful proud er my looks—'specially my brown skin, 'cause he wuz black as a coal—an' he couldn't he'p from showin' dem people 'at he thought I wuz fine an' swell. Why is it, Miss, if a man goes 'roun' braggin' on his wife an' talkin' 'bout her good looks, it always makes people

mad, an' dey say right away 'at he's a fool. He kin be good an' kind to her an' it's all right; but you let him go to braggin' 'roun' in public on her, an' folks will mighty soon tell you 'at he has got a soft place in his haid.

"I wuz goin' to tell you 'bout how come I got religion. Well, I was so friendless nobody seemed to lack me, so I tole God 'at ef He would forgive all my shortcomin's an' be my friend I'd love an' serve Him all my life. An', do you know, 'at from dat time for'ards I was a new person, an' my spare time I'd spen' tryin' to spell an' read out er de Scripture, enstead er thinkin' 'bout my looks an' cloze. An' when thin's would go wrong wif me I could mos' always think er some Scripture to comfort me. I ne'er will forgit one dry summer when I have to pack my washin' water from way down under a rocky hill. Sometimes, when I be claimin' dat hill wif a bucket er water on my haid an' a little bucket in each han', an' my back achin' so bad I could hardly walk, an' I'd stump my toe on a rock an' splash water all over me, I'd say dis Scripture: 'All thy ways are ways of pleasantness, an' all thy paths are peace.' An' would you believe it, dat would take all de rocks out er my way, an' mos' take de crick out er my back.

"But dis isn't doin' my work, werryin' you 'bout my troubles," said she, as she turned to the window. "An' dare is Ethey," she added, looking out of the window as she raised the shade. "She is out under dat tree by de pecker-woods' nes', watchin' her feed her young ones. She seems to

be tryin' her bes' to onderstan' bird lang'age. En fac', she seems to me to be tryin' to hol' conversations wif ev'ry kin' er bird an' animal. Even de rocks an' grass an' trees an' flowers don't 'scape her. Dey all seem to have a lang'age an' talk to her. Don't you think 'at she is a quare chile?"

Mrs. Gilmore replied that she thought her an unusually intelligent child.

"Yas'm," said she, "I know 'at she is enteler-gent, but yit an' still she cert'ny is quare—an' I don't much think 'at she will live to git raised up. She seems to have so many diffe'nt kin's er idees in her haid fuh a chile. I believe 'at it makes her delicate. Her mother keeps her ensho'ence paid up; she don't much think 'at she'll raise her. I know I couldn't he'p from bein' oneasy 'bout her ef I wuz in Malinda's place. Why, Miss, dat chile is so growd up in all her thoughts an' conversation. Jes, please, ma'm, see how much in-truss she takes in dat ole pecker-wood, watchin' all her ways an' actions," stopping and looking intently at the child.

"But," she continued, as she rubbed vigorously on the window-pane, "I don't lack de pecker-wood. He is got de big haid worser en any bird dey is. He do have sich a way er hikin' up his shoulders an' stalkin' 'roun' on de sides er trees an' houses, stickin' dat ole mouf er his in ev'ry thin' tell he makes me think er some people what goes 'roun' stickin' dey bill in ev'rybody's effairs. Den dese ole birds doesn't take ole daid grass an' leaves an' buil' dey nes' up in de trees, where dey can't hurt nuffin, lack yuther birds, but has to go

peckin' 'roun' people's houses even, tryin to fin' a sof' place where dey kin destroy somethin' 'fore dey kin go to housekeepin' lack a decent bird.

"Little ole English sparrers is imp'dent an' werry some, too. Dey even comes an' buil's dey nes' on yo' winder-sill, ef you leaves de shutters open. Nuffin can't hurt 'em. I don't actyully believe 'at rough on rats would kill 'em. I know 'at whiskey don't have no effec' on 'em, fuh one time I mix some whiskey an' cherries in meal, an' put it on de walk, but it ne'er have no effec' on 'em. I wuz sho 'at dey would lose dey haid fuh once-t. But no, ma'm! Dey et all dey wanted, an den dey envited de robins to have a nip. De robin is sich a socherable sort er bird, he he'p hisse'f a plenty, an' it wuzn't long 'fore he have his wings hangin' down, an' his tail feathers a-draggin', an' he wuz anythin' but steady on his feet. I didn't tell my preacher, 'cause I know he'd think I ought to save dat whiskey fuh sickness."

She went into the sitting-room to get some soft paper to polish the window. As she came back, she added:

"I do love to see dat angel hoverin' over dat little pickaninny," referring to a piece of bric-a-brac near a little figure representing a little darkey eating a slice of watermelon. "It makes me think 'at de gargean angel is watchin' over my nation. You know 'at Gawd say in de Scriptures, 'I will give my angels charge concernin' thee,' an' dat do give me a lot er comfort. It's true 'at it doesn't say colored people, but fuh dat matter it doesn't 'specially mention white people, either. I can't

he'p from thinkin' 'at Gawd is goin' to give de same chance to colored people 'at He do to white people—dat is, ef dey will persevere in good works, an' 'schew all evil.

"But," she added, turning to Mrs. Gilmore, "has you heyard 'at dey is goin' to shet up all de colored schools, an' not 'low colored people no mo' schoolin' tell dey gits entelergent an' stops committin' crimes?"

Mrs. Gilmore told her that she had not, and that she did not believe it.

"Well," she continued, "I don't know nuffin 'bout it. Somebody read it to me out er de paper. I couldn't onderstan' it; fuh white folks is been gittin' aigercated ever sense long befo' I wuz born, an' dey isn't stopped committin' crimes yit. Ev'ry once-t an' awhile I hears 'at a white man is been sent to de pen'tentery, an' sometimes it's a high-up banker, an' sometimes it's even a white preacher, what is done gragerated, wif his daplumeyer in pocket, runs 'way wif a yuther man's wife."

Mrs. Gilmore laughed, but Aunt Vesta remained serious.

"Now, I isn't sayin' dat to hit at white people, but I can't onderstan' how white folks kin expect aigercation to work a grander merical on po' colored people, jes out er slavery, en it kin on white folks, what is been gittin' aigercated ever sense long befo' George Washin'ton's times.

"But, Lawdy, Miss, don't you know 'at I feels my remissness in not livin' as near de cross as I might. Do you know 'at it's lots easier to talk

good en it is to *be good*? Now, here's me—I kin talk to Ethey 'bout not lettin' yuther people's bad actions an' manners drive away her happy, peaceful thoughts, but yit an' still I can't always do it. Yas'm, I kin mos' feel 'at I is raised up an' soarin' in de air when I's tellin' somebody else how to be good, an' maybe nex' minnit I fin's myse'f harborin' thoughts 'at's anythin' but Scripture. I know well 'nough 'at de Scripture say 'at you mus' love yo' neighbor as yo'se'f, but I don't keep up wif de Scripture dare—but—to tell de trouf," animatedly, "some er my neighbors is so quare an' critical, an' got sich cur'us ways, 'at it jes seems empossible fuh me to keep up wif de Scripture."

As Aunt Vesta was finishing her "experience," Ethey came in at the back door of the hall. Going up to Mrs. Gilmore, she said, "Miss, you know what dat white lady tole me 'bout dem *raven-black* birds what pack bread an' meat to dat ole man down on de creek?"

Mrs. Gilmore shook her head.

"You know, she say 'at one time a ole man wuz down on de creek, an' 'at he didn't have nuffin to eat, an' 'at he wuz mos' starve hisse'f to deaf, an' she say 'at Gawd sent some raven-black birds down dare to pack meat an' bread to him. She say 'at ev'ry mornin' an' ev'ry evenin', when dat ole man would git hongry, he'd look up in de sky an' see dem raven-black birds comin' flyin' fruh de air wif de meat an' bread. Now, dey sho mus' been diffe'nt from our kind er black birds. An',

Miss, don't you know 'at Gawd know ole Mr. Blue Jay too well to trus' him to pack meat an' bread to a tramp?"

"But, Ethey, was he a tramp? Did the lady say that he was a tramp?"

"No'm, she didn't terzackly say 'at he wuz a tramp, but he mus' er been a kind er half-way tramp er he wouldn't er lay 'roun' on de creek bank waitin' fuh birds to feed him. Pete say 'at times is mighty change'—'at when people does dat way now dey gits put in de lock-up."

"What's the matter with Mr. Blue Jay?"

"Miss," in great excitement, "isn't you no better 'quainted wif ole Mr. Blue Jay en dat? Don't you know 'at ole Mr. Blue Jay don't keer fuh nobody but hisse'f? Jes so he kin fill he own craw, dat's all he keer fuh. No'm, dat ole man would er sho got lef' ef he had er 'pended on ole Mr. Blue Jay to feed him." Turning and pointing to a large tree in the yard, she continued:

"Do you know what he done jes a minnit ago? Nuffin but walk right into de kitchen an' take a pack er cig'rette papers off de kitchen table, an' fly up in de tree an' give 'em to he wife to paper dey house wif! But ole Mr. Blue Jay wuz ap'pinted fuh once-t, fuh de win' wuz a-blowin' a reg'lar harycane, an' when he go to give 'em to he wife, de win' don't do nuffin but takes 'em up agin an' lan' 'em on de groun'. Ole Mr. Blue Jay wuz so mad 'at he mos' die. He flewd on down to de groun', hollerin' jes as loud, after dem cig'rette papers. Dey wuz scattered all over de groun', an' you sho would a thought it wuz



snowin', fuh de groun' wuz jes plum white wif dem cig'rette papers. Den ole Mr. Blue Jay flew on up to he house an' goes to fussin' at he wife 'bout it. But she tole him 'at she couldn't he'p de win' from blowin', an' he ought to know 'at she couldn't buck up 'ginst a cyclone."

"My good Lawd, honey," said Aunt Vesta, holding up both hands, "did you ever heah de lack er dat? Why, I wouldn't be surprised ef dat chile wuz to come in nex' an' tell us 'at de Angel Gab'al wuz a-flyin' fruh de air callin' us to jedgment! Birds sho is quare, an' dey gives us good advice an' tells us lots er thin's sometimes. Now, de meadow-lark sings us a good serment when he say, 'Laziness will kill you! Laziness will kill you.' An' de phebee bird tells us when it's goin' to rain—an' dat means lots to po' people what aint got no good washin' water. When we heahs de phebee birds, we knows 'at it's goin' to rain, an' 'at we mus' git ready all our barrels an' tubs an' jars to ketch de water. An' I has heyard at pigeons makes lack dey is postman and carries letters miles and miles fru de air. You reccolec's 'bout de dove sent out er de ark?"

"Yas'm," said Ethey, "an' wait a minnit, please, ma'm, Miss, don't you believe 'at little ole Mrs. Phebee Bird mus' er tole Mr. Norey 'bout dat big rain in de fuss place? Dat lady say 'at Gawd tole him 'at it wuz goin' to rain, an' 'at he mus' buil' he ark an' git ev'rybody to go in it, so 'at dey wouldn't git drowned. But you say 'at Gawd don't talk to people to dey face. Ef He don't talk to people to dey face, He mus' er got little ole

Mrs. Phebee Bird to er tole Mr. Norey 'bout dat big rain comin'. An' maybe dat's why so many people wouldn't believe 'at sich a turble big rain wuz comin', 'cause he say 'at a little bird tole him. You know lots er people won't believe big tales ef you tell 'em 'at a little bird tole you. But ef Gawd had er went right up to dey faces, an' had er tole 'em *right to dey faces* all 'bout dat big rain, an' how high dem waters wuz a-goin' to git, it would a skeerd de life plum out er dem people, an' dey would er mos' break dey necks clamin' up in dat ark."

"Well, now," said Aunt Vesta, "Ethey sho have done hit de nail on de haid. Dem po' people what wouldn't git in dat ark mus' er got de word in some 'roun'-a-'bout kinder way, fuh nobody could er been so hard-haided as to turn a deef yeah to Gawd right to His face.

"But you has a new picture here, hasn't you, Miss," referring to a copy of the "Angelus." "An' dey is colored people, isn't dey, diggin' pertaters?"

"Oh, that is a picture of French peasants, and they are praying. They have just heard the ringin' of the 'Angelus,' calling them to prayers."

"Oh, dat's it! You know, I always thought 'at peasants wuz some kind er fowls. Well, but do you think 'at it's a good idee to wait fuh de bell to ring to pray? People better begin prayin' whene'er dey feels 'at Satan is temptin' 'em—dey better not wait fuh de ringin' er no bell. But won't you, please, ma'm, tell me whate'er could

make people have dey picture tooken lack dey wuz color'd when dey isn't? I can't tell to save my soul. Oh, but don't I recollect how long it tuck me to git use to bein' black! It jes mos' break my heart when I wuz little to think 'at I haf to be black. Yas'm, an' I hel' it 'ginst Gawd a long time—to think 'at He make me black! I thought 'at I ne'er could love an' serve Him.

"I know," continued Aunt Vesta, without waiting for a reply to this rebellious speech, "'at de Scripture say 'at Gawd is no 'specter er persons, but yit an' still I see 'at He make you white an' He make me black. Po' colored people has to corntent deyse'ves wif a little speck er white in dey eyes, an' on dey teef, an' on de bottom er dey foot an' de pa'm er dey han'. I ne'er could see what enjoyment Gawd could git out er makin' part er his chillun white an' de yuther part black, jes to mo'tify 'em. But, do you know, Miss, what mos' reconcile me to my little girl dyin'? I do know 'at no colored person e'er is had sich a pretty little girl. She did have sich shiny black eyes, an' she wuz as peart as a cricket an' happy from mornin' tell night. She wuz mos' three years old when she die, an' I thought when she wuz laid away 'at dey ne'er would be no mo' sunshine in dis worl' fuh me. But when she have been laid away mos' a week, I dreamt one night 'at she come back to me, an' wuz standin' by my bed, an' she wuz jes as white as any white chile on dis earf, an' she say to me: 'Mammy, don't you grieve fuh me no mo', fuh I is white now.' An' don't you

know 'at nuffin 'at de preacher say to me aint reconcile me lack dat, fuh I know 'at she wuz saved a lot er scorn an' sneers."

"An' will all little colored chilluns turn white when dey gits to be angels up in heaven?" asked Ethey, going up to Aunt Vesta.

"Yas, honey, I believes 'at dey will; so ef you ever specks to be white, you mus' be good, an' go to Sunday-school an' church. Dey isn't nuffin' lack de Sunday-school to 'splain de Bible.

"I al'ays gits lots er enformation when I 'tends de Sunday-school," she continued. "Now, you know, I ne'er is knowd where de French lang'age come from tell I heyard it in de Sunday-school. I ne'er could stan' de French lang'age, 'cause I wuz sole down Souf to a French family—not but 'at dey wuz good to me, but you know 'at I use to b'long to Miss Fannie, daughter of ole Colonel Street, an' live close to Richmon', an' I did have sich good, kin' white folks, an' when I wuz sole way down dare from 'em, an' from my mother an' all my people, it mos' broke my heart. I use to git so lonesome an' homesick 'at I use to think sometimes 'at I sholy would haf to jes lay down an' die. An' I use to git so werried listenin' to dat quare lang'age. I use to git so 'stonished at 'em. Dey would be sayin' 'la main' fuh de han', 'le bras' fuh de arm, 'la tête' fuh de haid, an' I use to say to myse'f: 'You ought er know 'at 'Merikins isn't goin' to stan' all dat foolishness! Ole Uncle Jack, a man on de plantation, use to mos' go 'stracted 'bout dat lang'age, too, an' he use to say to me: 'Ves', jes as sho as you live, dis

heah French lang'age is Satan's own lang'age, an' it mus' er been sent on us fuh a punishment.

"But I ne'er is knowd nuffin 'bout where it come from tell de Sunday-school teacher tole us 'bout it. She say ev'rybody use to talk jes lack 'Merikins, tell dey got to feelin' so big 'at dey make up dey min' to buil' deyse'ves a high tower, so 'at dey wouldn't have nuffin to do but to walk up it an' step right off into heaven. So dey commensted to buil' dey tower. Dey buil's it higher an' higher, an' jes 'bout de time dey think 'at dey hasn't got nuffin to do but step right off into heaven, Gawd don't do nuffin but mix up dey lang'age, an' dey all come down talkin' French, an' none er 'em couldn't onderstan' what de yuthers wuz sayin'. Now, ef I hadn't er paid dat visit to de Sunday-school, I ne'er would er knowd where dat French lang'age come from."

After Aunt Vesta's description of the building of the Tower of Babel, Ethey suggested to Mrs. Gilmore that as the windows were looking so bright and shiny it would be a pity not to "orniment the house wif some er dem roses from de rose hedge down in de pasture, as ole Mr. and Mrs. Bumble-Bee were down dare he'pin' deyse'ves, an' not askin' nobody no odds." Acting on the suggestion, Mrs. Gilmore went with her, carrying a basket and a large pair of scissors.

They had hardly filled the basket with wild roses when Ethey, pointing to a large waspish insect, having four gauzy wings, said excitedly:

"We better hurry 'way from heah; dare is a snake doctor, an' dey mus' be a sick snake heah

somewheres, an' it may be a blue racer fuh all 'at I knows. Snakes gits turble sick sometimes. Yas'm, I jes reckon' dey does git sick, an' sen' fuh a doctor, too. Dey isn't got one speck er patience wif no Christian Science. Well, one time ole Mrs. Snake did try to take up wif it, 'cause it wuz somethin' new. Her daughter wuz awful sick, but she wouldn't sen' fuh no doctor an' she wouldn't give her no medicine, an' her daughter kep' a gittin' worser an' worser. An' after while ole Mr. Blue Racer heyard 'bout it, an' he grab up de end er he tail right quick, an' he roll right on up in Mrs. Snake's house, an' he say to her: 'Woman, I say 'at ef you doesn't sen' fuh a doctor, dat gal is goin' to die. Do you heah?' An' dat skeerd ole Mrs. Snake mos' to deaf, so she sen' fuh de doctor, an' she isn't ne'er believed in no Christian Science sense. I tell you, ole Mr. Blue Racer knows how to make 'em walk chalk-line!"

When she had finished, she glanced slyly at Mrs. Gilmore to note the effect of her story. Receiving no reply, Ethey seemed for a moment disconcerted. Then, suddenly remembering the sick snake, she said:

"Miss, I tell you, we have better hurry an' git 'way from heah. Dat may be a sick blue racer dat ole snake doctor is come to see."

They started home, Ethey following with the basket of wild roses, trying to keep up with Mrs. Gilmore, and at the same time glancing from right to left into every bunch of clover by the wayside.

"I's tryin' to fin' you a five-leaf clover, an' ef

I do, I will give it to you, an' it will give you good luck; but ef I fin's a four-leaf clover I'll have to keep it, fuh it would give us boaf bad luck ef I wuz to give away a four-leaf clover. Ef I gits you a five-leaf clover, you mus' make a wush an' put it in you lef' han' shoe heel an' it will be sho to come true. Has you any idee what I intends to wush ef I finds a four-leaf clover?" Not waiting for a reply, she continued: "I intends to wush 'at you an' me an' Eli can git taken to de country dis evenin.' We haven't been down de Arrow Rock road fuh a month er Sundays."

They were entering the yard by the back gate when Etthey suddenly espied a carriage nearing the front entrance. A look of disappointment came over her face; then she said in a low, mumbling voice to herself, at the same time waving her hand: "Drive on, people! Drive on!" As the carriage passed without stopping, she added: "Thank goodness fuh that! Whenever I wants us to go anywhere, I can't hardly draw a easy breath tell we is in dat phaeton an' out er dis yard. You an' me have so many hindernses.

"Well, I will run an' git de water fuh de roses," as she gave Aunt Vesta the roses on the porch. "I has a move on me, you see, Sis' Hunter," she called back as she turned the corner of the house.

"Etthey! Etthey!" called Malinda from the window. "Where kin that chile be, Pete?" she asked of the boy, who was just coming into the kitchen with an armful of stove-wood.

"She wuz out by de cellarway a minnit ago, holdin' cornversation with a passel er birds," he

replied, laughing, "but she ignore me when I try to join in de cornversation."

"Well, you send her in heah when you go out dare an' tell her she better not ignore me!" As Ethy entered a moment later, breathless with excitement, the mother said:

"What you star-gazin' out in dat yard 'bout? Put up dat Norey's ark dis minnit, what you lef' scattered all over dis kitchen. What you mean by bein' so disorderly? Fuss thing you know, them beastes, as you calls 'em, will be dust an' ashes."

"Lawdy gracious, mama," said she excitedly, as she tumbled the animals into an ark-shaped box, "I jes been so 'stonish 'bout little ole Mr. Pee-wee—dat little ole widower bird what Susanne kill he wife. Would you b'lieve it, he done set out a ready? Yas'm,, he brung a yuther little bird home wif him dis mornin' to show her he house. But she don't ac' lack she wuz very anxious—she was mighty jubous 'bout somethin'. She ne'er ac' lack thin's pleased her very much. At fus' she light down by de side er de nes' an' peep in it, but she wouldn't set down in it. Den he hop down in de nes' an' talk an' talk an' talk to her 'bout it; but she shake her haid an' look away. Den he keep on talkin', an' after 'while she hop up an' set down in it, but she won't stay a minnit. She hop out, an' she scruch up her back, an' hike up her shoulders, an' stick up her haid in de air, but she won't even look at little ole Mr. Peewee."

"Well," replied Malinda, laughing, "Mr. Pe-



wee's actions don't 'stonish me, 'cause he b'longs to de male sect, an' dey can't live a minnit wifout somebody to wait on 'em. But little Miss Bird better be keerful. Ef she takes de ole gent'man befo' his fuss wife's tracks is out er de yard, her speret will come back an' hant her, sho."

"Well, I'll go tell Miss 'bout it," as, looking through the open door, she saw Mrs. Gilmore in the yard in the swing. A moment later, as she was standing beside her mistress giving a very graphic description of the bird courtship, the little "imps of Satan" passed and threw very knowing glances at Ethey. She watched them closely with arched eyebrows until they were out of sight, and very soon disappeared. When next seen she was riding down the carriageway on her stick horse, carrying under her arm a bundle of little switches. Mrs. Gilmore watched her slyly, to see what she would do with the switches. She dismounted and hitched her horse, talking to herself in a low, grumbling tone and at the same time shaking the switches at a little tree near by. She then selected a switch from the bundle and proceeded to wear it to threads on the little tree, after which, throwing the remains to the ground, she said: "Now, I hope dat settles you!" She continued the process until she had worn out two or three little switches on as many trees, saying each time: "I hope dat settles you!" When she had finished, she walked across to Mrs. Gilmore.

"Miss," she said, "I hope 'at you will 'scuse me fuh havin' dat ruxion in yo' front yard; but I jes had to settle wif dem little imps er Satan fuh

stickin' out dey moufs at me. I knowd 'at ef I settles wif 'em today, I kin be mo' perliter to 'em tomorrer, when I goes to Sunday-school."

"But did the little children poke out their mouths?" asked Mrs. Gilmore. "I really did not see them."

"Yas'm," quickly, "dey did—dey poked out dey moufs at me in dey *mines*. I knowd jes as soon as I look at 'em 'at dey wuz pokin' out dey moufs in dey mines."

## CHAPTER IV

"Well, come in, myster'us stranger," said Aunt Vesta, as, looking up, she saw Ethey in the doorway. "Where you been so long? You done disappear so suddent yuther day, I ne'er knowd what done become er you." Ethey had been weeping, but she was trying very hard to control herself. Going up to Aunt Vesta, she said:

"Do you know, Sis' Hunter, I has so many werriments I don't know what to do! I don't want to worry you wif my triberlations, but did you know 'at dat ole Benjerman Tilman done et up Mr. an' Mrs. Bryan?"

"Now, you don't say honey 'at dat ole black dog done et up dem two little orphan chickens de lady in de country give you!"

"Yas'm," with quivering lips, "he done et 'em clean up, an' aint lef' nothin' fuh a fun'al. An' dat ole black rascal know he have done wrong. At fuss he tended 'at he wuz playin' wif 'em—he make lack he thought dey wuz a ball. He'd throw 'em up in de air an' ketch 'em in he mouf; den he stuck he teef down in 'em hard an' et 'em boaf up. He et up Mrs. Bryan fuss, den he et up Mr. Bryan. Den he throw he ole se'f down on de groun' an' look lack a sheep-killin' dog."

"Well, honey, set down by me—you an' me aughter git consolation from each other, ef people er like sorrows an' sufferin' ever did, fuh jes las' night didn't somebody come an' git my two favrite

chickens, John Wesley an' Susannah, right off my back porch banisters! Yas, honey, when I went to put down my winder curtain I glimpsed 'em settin' dare, an' I have a resentment 'at I aughter put 'em under de house to roos'; but dey wuz settin' dare lookin' so kind an' lovin' I hated to daysturb 'em, an' I thought nobody would sholy steal from a po' widder woman lack me.

"But dey wuz tooken, an' de worse part of it, honey, befo' day I smelt feathers burnin', an' de smell er dem burnin' feathers wuz wafted in my south winder from my neares' neighbor's—an' him a exorter in de church! Yas, honey, way in de night I heyard my chickens squak, an' I jump out de bed barefooted an' run out dare—an' dey wuz gone! I saw a bright light at Brother Breens'. I holler an' call:

" 'Brother Breens! Brother Breens! Somebody done stole my chickens!'

"An' would you b'lieve it, honey, ef he didn't answer me right in his front yard! Yas, he wuz standin in his yard an' my gate wuz wide open. He come on over to my house. I tole him somebody done tuck John Wesley an' Susannah, an' he say:

" 'Umph! Umph! Umph! Who could er done it? Umph! Umph! Umph! Who could er done it?'

"I say to him:

" 'I don't know *who* could er done it; but I know *one* thing, I don't keer *who* done it—I hope dey'll have to *suffer* fuh it. I know de Scriptures say you mus' pray fuh yo' enemies, but I aint goin'

to do it—pray fuh my enemies! An' I hope dey *never will* prosper, an' *whatever* dey undertakes will come to *naught!*"

"He jes stood dare sayin': 'Umph! Umph! Umph! Who could er done it?' Den he went on home an' shet my gate jes as good an' kind as if he done *give* me two chickens! Yas, honey, John Wesley an' Susannah done been taken an' et up by de exorter; but dey's one lesson we gits from our troubles—at nothin' an' nobody kin stand 'ginst a chicken thief, when he gits chicken hongry, be he man or dog."

"But, Sis' Hunter, Mr. an' Mrs. Bryan wuz so onuseyul—dey wuz actor chickens, you know! Dey wuz so knowin'! Dey have all de actions er people; dey wuz terpeese reformers. De lady what hatch 'em out in de country say dey wuz al'ays smart. She say dey could peck dey little dinners an' drink water an' hol' dey little haids high in de air de minnit dey come out er dem aigg-shells, when dey didn't look lack nothing' but little pieces er down floatin' 'roun' in de yard. An' dey wuz al'ays so kin an' cheerful!" The recollection of the unusual attractions and accomplishments of the little chickens so overcame Ethey that, throwing her head on Aunt Vesta's shoulder, she burst into tears.

"Don't cry, honey," said Aunt Vesta, patting her gently, "dare's Susan B—has you done fuhgit 'bout Susan B. Ant'ny? Can't you an' Susan B. make friends?"

"No'm, 'cause Susan B. done turn herse'f into a rooster, an' co'se, sense she done tuck de shape

of de male sect, she aint goin to keer fuh nothin' an' nobody. Why, don't she jump up an' peck me whene'er I goes neah her?—an' her spurs is growin' an' she even tries to crow, an' mama say she is dang'ous. No'm, she can't ever be nothin' to me. She hates me in her sight an' I don't keer nothin' 'tall fuh her. No'm, dey isn't no mo' pleasure in dis worl' fuh me, c'ause when I go home dat long-mouf Pete will werry de life out er me. Why, I am werried to deaf livin'. Den, where is I goin' to when I die, if I can't so much as say 'fool' to people when dey makes me mad. Don't you know, Sis' Hunter, when I feels de speret upliftin' me, an' goes out in de yard to preach all by myse'f, dat black rannertan comes out dare an' drives my congergation all home, an' say to me:

"'Little nigger, git out er dis front yard wif dem bricks what you is killin' de gras wif. What you mean by hollerin' an' kervortin' in dis front yard lack a hyena? You's so spilt 'at dey'll soon be no livin' wif you.'"

"Yas, honey, he's yo' thorn in de flesh, I know, but don't let him trouble you. Why, chile," putting her arm around her and drawing her closer, "don't you know dis worl' aint no floatin' island er pleasure? We has our days er pleasure, 'tis true; but we has our days' er sorrow, too. Now, dis is one er yo' sorrow days. I speck tomorrow will be a pleasure day. Miss is goin' to go ridin' in de country, an' I'm sho she'll want you to go, too—an' she may go to dat same lady's house what give you Mr. an' Mrs. Bryan, an' she may have

some mo' little chickens. She may give you Mr. and Mrs. Roosevelt dis time, an' den," said Aunt Vesta, smiling, "dey'll be somethin' doin'.

"Yes, don't cry honey. You'll git dat ride to de country, I'm sho, honey. Dey is no joy much greater to me en drivin' out in de country, up hill, an' down, over good roads an' bad. Sometimes I say to myse'f: 'This do so remin' me er life. Fuh awhile we runs 'long smooth an' don't have to give no thought to our road; de groun's level, de fiel's beauteiful, an' ev'rythin' seems burstin' into lov'liness—nothin' to hinder de pleasure of our ride. But after while we notice a roughness in our way, an' we can't hardly enjoy de pretty slopin' hillsides fuh de rocks an' ruts 'at jars us. An' we fuhgit de pretty views lef' behin', an' can't b'lieve 'at jes over yonder is smooth roads an' green fiel's, wif de meadow-lark singin' her song of praise.

"Do you know, honey, we could git so much mo' out er life ef we could jes keep our werryments from makin' us fuhgit our joys an' pleasures. All my life long I has had days when I felt 'at de sky wuz dark an' cheerless, an' 'at de blackness of night wuz settlin' down 'roun' me. At sich times ef I had er remembered 'at it wuz only fuh a time, an' 'at tomorrow de sunburst er glory would be high in my firmament, it would er been so much better fuh me. Honey, ef we jes didn't think when de cloud rifts shet out de sun 'at dey have come to stay! Now 'at yo' little frien's, Mr. an' Mrs. Bryan, is gone, you fuhgits dey is goin' to be any mo' little chickens in de worl'.

But dey is, honey. Jes listen to de hens cacklin' so gaily! Dem aiggs will be hatched out, an' jes as smart little chickens as Mr. an' Mrs. Bryan will come out er dem aigg-shells. Co'se, honey, I isn't fuhgit none er dey smart reformans. I kin see 'em now, reformin on what you call dey terpeese, when dey'd jump high in de air an' swing on to beef-steak, an' swing on an' kick tell dey'd pull off dey little mouthful, an' den drap down an' wait tell nex' time; but yit an' still, honey, don't you think 'at Mr. and Mrs. Bryan is de onlies' smart chickens goin' to come out er aigg-shells. Chickens will be chickens de worl' over, an' jes as long as de roosters is crowin' an' de hens cacklin', smart, entellergent chickens will walk on dis earth. Gawd ne'er did intend 'at no two little chickens could be onlies' chickens.

"Now, honey—why, chile, you's sobbin' lack you done los' some near kin! Heah, let me wipe yo' little eyes on my ap'on—less you an' me git some pleasure out er dis visit. We has lost our chickens; but dey'll be chickens walkin' on dis earth long after you an' me done been laid under it. Why, chile, you isn't goin' to stop havin' enjoyment an' pleasure! Why, has you done fuhgit 'bout dat show comin'? Why, I kin almos' heah dat ban' playin' now! You'll git to go to dat show, I know, an' when dat ban' plays under de tent, an' all dem diff'ent kin's of animals comes marchin' in lookin' so knowin' an' onconcern, an' de air so full er dem diff'ent colored little balloons, an' all you little chilluns eatin candy an' pop-corn an' peanuts—you'll be in yo' ellerment. An' dem



terpeese reformers under dat show tent! Why, dey will cast Mr. an' Mrs. Bryan, even, in de shade! When you see dem beauterful ladies flyin' through de air, you'll sho git some idee er de actions of angels up in heaven; fuh if people wif dey mortal flesh an' no wings kin fly through de air lack dat, what will it be, chile, when we done dropped our mortal bodies an' is all speret, an' got wings, wif none er de sins er de flesh to hinder our heavenly flight.

"Now, chile, listen to me! I been heah a long time an' I never did know nobody but have dey disapp'intments in life. Now, dare wuz my Miss Fannie, back in Furginia, her life did seem so full of sunshine—beauterful home, plenty of money, an' plenty of servants to wait on her. It did look lack no rain-clouds e'er could gather over her haid. But dey did," said Aunt Vesta with a sigh, "er I'd been back in Furginia dis minnit wif my people. Yas, ended, honey, even Miss Fannie have to have troubles; fuh wif all de brightness of her sky, it wuzn't long tell we heyard faint ramblins' of getherin' storms an' ——"

"Why did yo' Miss Fannie have werryments? Why, I thought she never have nothin' to do but gether flowers an' hemstitch!" said Ethey in astonishment.

"Dat's so, honey, she did gether a great many flowers. But when people gether too many flowers, dey's mighty apt to git some thorns. Miss Fannie got married. She married Dr. Karner. He'd been waitin' on her a long time, but her family didn't want her to marry him, so she

wouldn't have him for a long time. But, honey, do you know 'at dey isn't nothin' 'at kin work on a woman's min' an' heart lack a onery good-fuh-nothin' man! Why, chile, dey ve'y emperfections an' onerryiness seems to plead fuh 'em, tell she can't think er nothin' but workin a merical on him an' turnin' him into somethin' good. He kep' a pleadin' an' a pleadin', an' lookin' pitterful 'roun' Miss Fannie, tell she thought he wuz so day-stracted 'bout her 'at de merical done already commenced to work, an' in spite of all de pleadin' an' beggin' of her family she marry him an' go 'way wif him; but he no sooner got her tell he seem to want to pay her back fuh makin' his courtship path so rocky."

"I'll bet he did," said Ethey drawing nearer Aunt Vesta.

"Let me tell you now, honey,—co'se you's too little to think 'bout sich thin's—but I'll tell you, 'cause a man hang 'roun' you lack he want to eat you aint no sign he'll be good to you ef he gits you. No, ended, honey! I have saw 'em when dey look lack dey want to eat 'em 'forehand; but jes as soon as dey git 'em, dey wuz sorry dey didn't eat 'em. Dey seem sorry 'at dey got any of 'em lef'. No, ended, honey, it's hardhaidedness lots er times makes men keep up de pursuit. Dey wants to show people dey got what dey went after. But ef he didn't make Miss Fannie sup sorrow! Po' Miss Fannie! Why, chile, don't you know 'at he wuz dat small an' little 'at he whip Tulip one time jes fuh a little foolishness 'at Miss Fannie tol' him endurin' dey courtship days. It wuz

dis way: One time, when he done been to see Miss Fannie, as he walk away, Tulip saw 'at his shoe heel wuz ve'y creen to one side; so she laugh at it to Miss Fannie, an' ax her ef her admirer aint got no better shoes. Miss Fannie thought it wuz funny an' ne'er thought of givin' no offense. But ef he didn't whip Tulip fuh dat soon as dey wuz married! Miss Fannie cried an' cried, 'cause she thought so much er Tulip. Why, when Tulip marry jes 'fore Miss Fannie, didn't Miss Fannie let her wear all her jewelry—gol' watch an' chain an' long yearrings—an' give her a white dress an' veil to git married in! An' oh, sich lively times as dey did have—music an' dancin'! Music, honey, when I wuz young use to make me float in de air same as ef I had wings. "But," with a sigh, "I hasn't crossed my feet in a great many years. Even now, honey, I can't turn no deaf yeah to music, 'cause I done been raised on music. My father wuz a fiddler, an' from de time I could stand 'lone I wuz keepin' step to dat music. He use to play, 'Pretty Bettie Martin' fuh me to dance by. It went lack dis," said Aunt Vesta, clearing her throat and singing:

'Pretty Bettie Martin tiptoe fine,  
Couldn't git a husban' to suit her mln'.'

An' ef I didn't dance, honey, an' toss my haid an' switch my little coat tail mos' over my haid! Yas, ended, honey, I listens to Jim Johnson's fiddle same as de rankes' sinner. Use to be, chile, in times past, gay colors an' music could make me fuhgit dey wuz sich a thing as trouble in de worl'."

"Dat's so, Sis' Hunter, I know, fuh ef I hadn't stop a minnit to listen to Mr. Johnson's fiddle on my way heah, my heart would er broke plum in two."

"Straighten dat mosquito-bar at de do', honey, please. De flies is gettin' so bad. Flies is one er Pharoah's troubles, an' I don't see why he didn't take 'em wif him an' git 'em drowned in de Red Sea. Ef dey wuz Pharoah's pests sent to punish Pharoah, I don't see why Gawd 'lows 'em to stay heah an' worry Christians. It's de truth, honey, not one of Pharoah's varments but's lef' wif us— an' him an' his hoasts long ago burried in de Red Sea! Yas, even his horses an' charrets done went down, but we has de insecs,—de air is so full of 'em we can't hardly breath. I don't see what Gawd could er been thinkin' 'bout, not sendin' 'em off wif Pharoah."

"But, Sis' Hunter' don't you reckon Gawd must er lef' 'em to kinder fill up? Don't you know de worl' must er been skeerce er people 'bout dat time?"

"Dat may be, honey," said Aunt Vesta, laughing, but one thin' sho, ef dese riddles er life aint worked out right, nobody kin blame you an' me, fuh we does our sheer of guessing."

"You's de onlies' person in Marshall what's got dem mosquito-bar do's, aint you, Sis' Hunter?" referring to the mosquito-bar hung in front of the outside doors and held in place by small rods run through the hem at top and bottom.

"Yas, honey, I brung dat style from de South. Dat's down-South style."

"But, look quick, Sis' Hunter—aint dat ole Aunt Suckey Hockins walkin' 'long dare so spry?"

"It cert'n'y is, chile."

"I wonder is dat ole lady got use to de whistlin' er dem cars yit. You know, she drap daid de fuss time dat C & A railroad come to dis town."

"Yas, honey, an' when she come to, de doctor ax her how come she got so skeerd. She say when dat ole thin' holler so loud, she thought de admunsary had her, sho."

"You has travelled too long an' too fuh to git skeerd at any kinder cornveyance, aint you, Sis' Hunter?"

"Well, I'm not so sho 'at no kinder cornveyance wouldn't skeer me. Now, dare is 'Lijah's charret; ef it wuz to light down in my yard, I might feel some er de tremblements er fear. I might think it a great compliment to me, but yit an' still I'd jes as soon it would pass me by."

"Dat's me, too, Sis' Hunter! Why, ef I knowd I could git in 'Lijah's charret an' go straight up to heaven an' see Gawd an' de flamin' swards, an' walk on dem golden streets, so he'p me Lawdy, I wouldn't keer 'bout goin'; 'cause I might lose my eyesight—Sis' Washin'ton tol' me 'at people gits struck blin' wif de dazzlin' brightness er thin's up in heaven. Now, aint dat jes scanlous! She say 'at ev'rythin' is so burnished an' bright 'at it dazzle de eyes, an' people loose dey eyesight—Excuse me from heaven fuh a while—I has my eyesight, an' I kin see plenty heah. Why, I has my eyes bug out all de time as it is."

"Yas, honey, you'll fin' plenty to look at in

dis worl' fuh a while, ef Gawd spare yo' life. Heaven is up dare, an' it's goin' to stay dare an' —"

"Yas'm, heaven will keep—aint nobody goin' to *steal* heaven an' you kin jes excuse me from it fuh a while. An' when it comes to sky-carr'ages, Miss' phaeton is good 'nough sky-carr'age fuh me, 'cause I kin glimpse de sky good 'nough from it."

"But, Lawdee, honey, do you know 'at people is comin' to dat? Times is mo' an' mo' critercal. Do you know people is even now travellin' 'roun' in sky-cornveyances?"

"Yas'm, Sis' Hunter, didn't Miss read me right out er de book 'bout a ole man 'at traveled in some kinder sky-cornveyance an' went up to de moon' where dey have mountains made out er solid diamonds, an' where de gol' dus' is so thick 'at people gits deyse'ves mos' strangled to deaf when dey walk 'roun' up dare? An' she say 'at when dat ole man come back home an' tole 'bout his wonderful trip, de perlice said he wuz crazy and put him in de lock-up."

"Well, it do seem to me 'at dey isn't no need er doubtin' no kinder tales; 'cause times is so onuseyul 'at no tale could be too big to be true. An' when it comes to travellin' cornveyances, I don't know where dis worl' is goin' to stop. I wonders sometimes what Gawd kin be thinkin' 'bout, lowin' so much of it; 'cause I b'lieve it makes sin—people has so many an' sich quick ways er gittin' out er sight. Sides, I b'lieve it makes divorces; men an' women gits sich a taste fuh travelin' 'at dey lose dey taste fuh each other. Aint dat ole Sis' Tuncil callin' me at de gate?"

As Aunt Vesta and Ethey went to the gate, Sister Tuncil said she had time to speak a moment only, as she was hurrying home from Dave Barton's funeral.

"I wuz sorry 'at I have to miss dat fune'al," said Aunt Vesta, "but I had sich a oneasness in my bres' all night. What fuh fune'al did you have?"

"Why, a good fune'al! Jes fine! De preacher tuck Dave right up to heaven an' set him on de throne close to his Lawd an' Savior; but he skun alive de most er dat congergation, sho as you is born!"

"Why so, Sis' Tuncil?" said Aunt Vesta, in great surprise.

"Why, fuh naglectin' Dave so while he live, an' den goin' an' pilin' flowers knee-high on his corpse."

"Now you's talkin'!" said Aunt Vesta, bringing her hands together with emphasis.

"Yas'm, he give it to 'em in de neck. He pint at Dave an' say:

"'De corpse tol' me 'fore he died 'at many is de day he has set at home hongry an' lonesome, an' nobody ministered unto him. An' de wife er his bosom done been bewitched away from him an' is even now travelin' 'roun' in a fur country sellin' false hair puffs an' pomperdors.' Yas, he call 'em 'whited sepperkurs!' an' he grit his teef at 'em an' say: 'A pot er soup when he wuz livin' would er done him mo' good en all de flowers you kin pile up on him, now 'at he is daid!' I duck my haid 'hind a pos' an' couldn't he'p laughin', 'cause dem words sho did come home to

dem people, fuh dey look lack sheep-killin' dogs. I didn't take none of it to myself, 'cause I don't b'long to dey congergation an' nobody ne'er did s'licit me."

"Po' Dave," said Aunt Vesta, "ef he hadn't er needed nothin', he'd had a plenty. I use to work fuh a white lady 'at have a millenaire son-in-law, an' ef dat ole lady an' her daughters didn't persecute dat po' man doin' thin's fuh him! Ef dey didn't have somethin' on a plate, beggin' him to eat it, dey'd be shakin' up a piller to put under his haid er puttin' down de Morris cheer an' tellin' him to lay down in it an' res' hisse'f. An' ef he go off in de yard an' lay down in de hammick, ef some er dem women didn't go out dare an' shake dat hammick jes as long as he wuz in it. Dat po' man use to look pitterful to me, spite er all his money. I used to say to myse'f, 'Uh-uh! Ef you wuz a po' man, you'd be let alone part er de time anyhow.' Dat's de truth! An' while dey wuz a makin' dat ole man eat when he wuzn't hongry, ef you had so much as looked t'words dat grape arbor, dey'd grudged you de glimpse er dem grapes."

"But my Lawd, Sister Hunter, what's de use werryin' 'bout millenaires? Dey's so disapp'intin'. Don't you recollect de time we all went to de 'Cific Depot to see dat millenaire? Fore Gawd, ef we didn't all git out de wash-tub an' mos' break our necks goin' to see him—why, all Stringtown wuz dare! An' ef we wuzn't de cheapes' lookin' set er niggers when dey pint out de onerries' lookin' white man dare, an' say 'at



he wuz de millenaire! Why, de didn't look lack he could own a quarter—an' we 'spected him to have money pinned all over him, an' thought maybe he might throw some of it in de crowd, jes to see 'em scramble fuh it! But, not changin' de subjec' 'tall, did you know Dora died las' night?"

"Yas, Ca'line Smith tol' me, an' she say 'at Dora wuz choice to de las', 'at she have her fav'-rites up to death. You know, she al'ays thought so much of her pa? Ca'line say she wuz dare yestiddy, an' she say Dora tol' her pa to set down by her an' not give up his place to nobody, an' she say to him:

"'Oh, pa, don't you think it would be glor'us ef Gawd would sen' de charret fuh me?—'cause I wants to go straight up through de sky to heaven."

"Well, I declare, now, Sis' Hunter, aint dat jes lack Dora? But, my Lawd, gracious me, co'se Gawd couldn't efford to do dat; 'cause ef he wuz to sen' de charret fuh Dora, ev'rybody else would think he oughter sen de charret fuh dem, too. Well, I mus' go. Dora's fune'al will be tomorrow an' I has a day's i'onin' to finish. I don't want to miss dat fune'al. I know de preacher will give her a good fune'al serment, 'cause she wuz so high-minded an' thought so much er her pa."

"Well," said Ethey, as she sat down on the porch step beside Aunt Vesta, "I hope Dora's pa wuz somethin' to be proud of; 'cause 'taint ev'ry little colored chile 'at has got a good kin' pa."

"Yas, Dora did love her pa, an' he cert'ny did doat on Dora. You know Dora's pa has had visions, an' he has saw heaven in a vision—well,

to tell de truth, he say he went up dare an' talked wif Gawd an' de angels. He say he saw de twelve gates an' de flamin' swards, an' all, jes as it is writ up in de Bible."

"An' wuz Dora's pa treated white up in heaven, Sis' Hunter?" asked Ethey, hesitatingly.

"Endeed he wuz, chile; but he say de angels up in heaven wuzn't white, ——"

"Wuzn't white, Sis' Hunter! Angels in heaven wuzn't white!" in great astonishment.

"No, honey, he say dey wuz colored—not to say black, but gol'-colored. He say dey done tuck on de glammer er de throne an' shine lack gol'. An' he say dem angels have mo' de actions er colored people en white—dey seem so keer-free an' onconcern 'bout trouble. An' he say dey all set 'roun' wif dey wings folded an' laugh an' talk so socherble to ev'rybody 'at come in. An' he say when dey want to move to some yuther place, dey don't have to make no action er dey own, but jes seem 'at a little heavenly breeze would come 'long an' jes waft 'em heah an' dare, wherever dey want to go. Po' ole Brother Nathan's been a hard worker all his life long! Been ole slave, you know, an', co'se, he's mighty glad to think 'bout goin' where he'll have a chance to fold his wings an' git wafted 'roun' 'thout no actions er his own. He's a mighty tired ole work-horse, honey, an' no wonder he sees heaven an' Gawd an' angels in his dreams. An' he say dem angels have diamond eyes, an' mos' pierce a hole in you when dey look at you."

"But gol'-colored angels, Sis' Hunter! Dat

cert'ny is news to me! Why, Sis' Hunter, I n-e-v-e-r did in all my lifetimes think er angels bein' any yuther color but white. An' dey has golden colored angels up in heaven! Well, well, well! Now, Sis' Hunter, kin you tell me why Gawd ever did make any er His people black in de fuss place?"

"I don't know why, honey, onless He done it fuh cur'osity. His fuss people you know wuz dus' color—dey haf to be dus' color, 'cause dey wuz made out er dus'. Now, nobody would want to be dus' color, 'cause it's sich a ugly, ashy color. You know, in slave times black people used to greese dey faces wif fat meat to make 'em black an' shiny. De colored man 'at marry Tulip wuz black, an' he used to greese his face tell it would shine lack a lookin'-glass. Why, you could see yose'f in Tom's face when he'd come to see Tulip! Den dey marsters lack to see 'em lookin' slick an' shiny, 'cause it make people think dey wuz fat an' well. In slave times ashy-lookin' colored people wuz considered onhealthy. Why, de grandes' compliment you could pay a colored person in slave times wuz to say dey wuz very slick an' shiny!

"Well, honey, talkin' 'bout why we's black. You know, sometimes I thinks maybe Gawd got to 'spermentin' wif people, tryin' to see how many diff'ent colors He could make in people. Let me see how many diff'ent colors has we got in people"—counting on her fingers—"white, black, yeller, red, brown an' copper color—six. Almos' as many colors in people as flowers. Now, honey,

maybe Gawd made all us diff'ent colors of people to decorate de worl' wif. Who knows? We oughten none er us scorn our color, fuh we has no idee what a pretty sight de diff'ent colors an' nations er people may be to Gawd, as He glimpses us from heaven. I heyard a white lady say 'at one er de grandes' sights er de Worl's Fair wuz viewin' de diff'ent colors an' nations er people.

"Ef all de colors an' nations er people could dwell together in peace an' perfection it would be so much better, happier worl'. Now, when de worl' wuz young, an' Adam an' Eve dwell together in joy an' peace, it must er been a heaven on earth; de ve'y air must er been full er music an' poetry. An' Adam an' Eve must er wake up ev'ry mornin' wif a new song in dey hearts. But, chile, chile, we can't brag much on Adam an' Eve, fuh dey couldn't keep step to de heavenly music an' permitted de discords er Satan to enter an' daystroy dey peace an' happiness. Do you know, honey, 'at ef dey hadn't been so cur'us an' pryin', an' had corntented deyse'ves wif what dey had, it would been so much better fuh us? Yas, honey, it's all on account of de sins of our fo' parents 'at you an' me has troubles. But fuh dem, dey'd be no tears in our eyes an' no sorrow in our hearts.

"But, honey," she continued cheerfully, "ef ev'ry teardrap 'at trickles down our cheeks is turned into dimonts to shine in our crowns up in heaven, you an' me will have crowns blazin' lack de noonday sun, won't we? Now, I has shed tears 'nough to furrow my cheeks deep as de banks er Blackwater; but I al'ays tries to look over de

deep valleys an' see only de high mountains er faith an' hope. Co'se, some days I has a grander outlook en yuthers. Ef not a sparrer fall to de groun' but our Father takes note, He mus' feel a compassion fuh de sorrows of His chilluns. De 'Vangiles tole us at de pertracted meetin' 'at our tears ascend to heaven an' return in rayfreshin speretyul showers. Why, you even now looks rayfreshed. Dat's right, honey, let's have de sun-burs'! We done had de cloud-burs', an' now is time fuh a clear sky. Don't permit de clouds to gether. Don't werry 'bout yo' color, but jes think 'at, after all, we diff'ent nations an' colors of people air Gawd's flowers, bloomin' in His flower garden heah below, an' you an' me is de color 'at He choose fuh us to be."

"Yas'm, but it do seem square, Sis' Hunter, ef Gawd wuz tryin' to make flowers out er us He'd make us black; 'cause who ever did see any black flowers bloomin' anywheres?"

"Honey, you fuhgits de black pansies, an' people thinks so much of them, 'cause dey's such a rarity," said Aunt Vesta, laughing.

"I done clare fuhgit 'bout dem black pansies. Talkin' 'bout black angels—now, what would dat black tar-ball, Pete, look lack floatin' 'roun' up in heaven wif a lilly-white robe an' a dimont crown on? Don't you know he would look scand'lous? He would make heaven look perfec'ly 'dic-lous—wouldn't he, Sis' Hunter?"

"Well, I mus' confess," said Aunt Vesta, with difficulty controlling herself, "at ef some people don't change dey looks an' actions up in heaven

from down heah, dey goin' to make it look might'ly lack a down-South Mardi Gras done been turned loose up in heaven. I b'lieve myse'f Gawd mus' sholy enten' to make us all white, or, anyway, match in color; 'cause ef He don't, it's goin' to be mighty hard to keep white angels an' black angels from scrappin' when dey meets on dem gol' side-walks."

"Uh-uh! But dem gol'-colored angels wif folded wings! Well, I know one thin'—I isn't ready to set 'roun' nowheres wif my wings folded. Why, Sis' Hunter, I hasn't no learnin' yit! Why, I can't hardly read a picture book, much less readin' an' writtinenin'; but I got my eyesight an' hearin', an' I kin git learnin', an' fin' plenty of enjoyment in dis life."

"Yas, honey' an' you got good use er yo' han's an' feet, so you kin al'ays fin' good healthy employment. I hope you tries to make yo'se'f useful to Miss fuh her 'tentions to you?"

"Oh, yas'm, I does. I waits on her, han's her books, an' fills de scrap-basket; but, co'se, I lacks some time of my own. I don't want her to think 'at she own me."

"Don't want her to think 'at she owns you! Well, ef dat don't beat de beaters! Chile, don't you know 'at dat's what's de matter wif our color—so 'fraid to work fuh anybody fuh fear dey'll own 'em? Don't you know, chile, 'at Satan owns idlers? 'Sides, don't you know you is part ownin' Miss, when she is drivin' 'roun' out in de country a-tellin' you dem m'racklous stories?"

"Yas'm, but Sis' Hunter, she is so notioney.

Sometimes she will talk to me an' sometimes she won't. Why, sometimes she don't seem to know 'at I'm in dat phaeton er dat house er anywheres on top er dirt, an' I has to entertain myse'f wif any little ole fly er bug 'at I sets my two eyes on. An' sometimes I isn't got nothin' no closter to me en a little ole bird flyin' up in de sky. No'm, she reads, an' hemstitch, an' look 'roun', an' don't seem to be 'tall beholdin' to me."

"Don't seem to be 'tall beholdin' to you! Why, my gracious me, chile! Why, honey, ef you don't min' you'll be spilt. You'll be wantin' to own people yo' own se'f. Chile, think of de enlight-erment you git when she do feel lack entertainin' you. Honey, my heart wuz achin' when you come in, but ef you don't make my sides ache now!" said Aunt Vesta, holding her sides and laughing heartily.

"Why, Sis' Hunter, some er her tales puts my min' in sich wonderment 'at I don't know what to do wif myse'f! Now, jes let me tell you dat bear story she tole me: She say 'at one time dey wuz a ole man wif a big bal' haid goin' 'long de big road close to some great big woodses, an' some little chillun come out dare an' got to hollerin' an' laughin' an' pokin' fun at he bal' haid, an' dat ole man didn't do nothin' but call de bears to come out er dem woodses an' eat up dem little chillun. Wuzn't dat shameful! Why, he could er whup dem little chilluns an' dey wouldn't er done dat no mo'! Do she think I's green?"

"Yas, honey, dat do stan' to reason 'at whippin' would er made 'em stop it; but yit an' still we all

know 'at little chillun is ve'y hard-haided. Now dat wuzn't no fairy tale Miss wuz greenin' you wif. Dat wuz a rayl Bible bear story, an' dat man wuz one of de prophets, an' it must er been de only way he could do dem chillun. You know, in Bible times de worl' wuz so full er chillun—de worl' done generate so fas'—dey must er got so haidy an' onruly 'at dey wuzn't no yuther way to manage 'em. Now, dare wuz Pharoah an' his hoasts—dey done werries de life out er de children of Israel tell Gawd had to drown dem all in de Red Sea.

"No, honey, dat's all so. Don't you 'low none er de critercalness of yo' min' to work on dat story. Brother Jones preached 'bout dat ve'y prophet las' Sunday night. An' heahs how come him to do it. He wuz rabukin' some girls fuh makin' fun of a ole woman's hat. You see a ve'y po' lookin' ole woman come in church Sunday mornin', an' she have on a ve'y quare lookin' hat, an' dem gals in de choir commensted to nudge each other an' sniggle an' laugh. De preacher saw 'em; but he never let on. He never say a word tell de night serment; den he tuck his tex' from 'Lijah's bears. He say 'at Lijah wuz walkin' peaceable 'long de roadside, not botherin' nobody, an' dem little chillun come a'whoopin' an' a-hollerin' lack a lot er hyenas, an' dey track 'long at 'Lijah's heels, hollerin', 'Go up ole bal' haid! Go up ole bal' haid!' tell it so tarryfy 'Lijah 'at he didn't know what to do wif hisse'f; so he called de bars out of de woodses to eat 'em up. An' de



preacher shuck his fis' at 'em, an' say to 'em in wrath:

"'Yas, an' Gawd have ways yit of punishin' sinners fuh redeculin his people! An' ef de bears is skeerce, he have plenty of dire calamities—cyclones an' earthquakes an' high waters He kin sen' to sweep 'em off de face of de earth. Fuh, I tell you now, Gawd have done got tired er de pertness an' imp'dence of young people, an' He kin fin' plenty er ways of gittin' even wif 'em."

"De preacher never call no names; but ev'rybody know who he mean, an' dem gals wuz so shame-faced dey couldn't hardly look up."

"'Yas'm, but what you reckin' she tole me 'bout Gawd droppin' He onlies' little boy baby down fuh people to raise up an' kill, so 'at ev'rybody would go to heaven when dey die. What you think er dat?"

"Why, dat wuz so, too, honey. Dat wuz ——"

"But, what kinder way wuz dat to treat a little boy chile?"

"Why, honey, dat wuz—why, honey, you do ask sich enquirin' questions! You's so hard on my min', chile. Don't you know, chile, dat wuz de plan of salvation—dat wuz so we could all go to heaven when we die. Dat wuz to redeem de worl' from sin an' sorrow, an' while to our natchul eyes it do seem strange, yit an' still, when we gits our speretyul vision, we'll onderstan'. Now, honey, I feels sorry fuh you, 'cause you an' me is so much alike. We both think 'at dey isn't nothin' we couldn't emprove on in dis worl', ef we had er

jes been cornsulted in time. We's al'ays sayin', 'How come dis, an' how come dat.' Now, as you an' me wuzn't even generated in dem times, nobody aint goin' to hol' us 'sponsible, an' let us not be too pryin' an' cur'ous; 'cause Adam an' Eve aint de onlies' people haf to suffer fuh meddlin' wif de whys an' wherefores of Gawd. Dare is Lot's wife, when Sodam an' Gomarah wuz day-stroyed—a angel tuck de pains to go by dey house to tell 'em 'bout what wuz comin', an' to warn 'em to leave de place an' not even look back. Now, Lot done all right an' went straight ahead; but his wife wuz so cur'us an' pryin' she had to stop an' look aroun' to see how it wuz goin' to be done, an' she got turned into a pillar of salt.

"Now, from dis time for'ards, les you an' me, honey, try not to have sich enquirin' min's 'bout Gawd's mysteries; 'cause you know Gawd say, 'Man can not know My mysteries an' live.' Why, honey, you an' me oughter be thankful 'at we wuzn't generated in de time of de flood, fuh we would be long ago swept away. Why, we would er been so cur'us, an' sich doubtin' Thomases, 'at we'd er been standin' on de river bank to de las' minnit, creenin' our naiks an' thinkin' 'at de tale wuz too big to be true, an' 'at maybe de flood wuzn't comin', an' de high waters would er got us sho. Yas, honey, we'd been swept away wif de bo'constrictors, as de preacher say at de pertracted meetin': 'Dey wouldn't go on de boat,' " imitating the tone and gestures of the preacher, "'an' dey wuz swept away wif all dem herocious beastes! Wit de p'isonous reptiles an' de bo'-

constrictors floatin' on de water.' Lawd, honey, it do make my blood run col' to think what might er happened to you an' me ef we had er been generated de same time of dem po' pitterful people of de flood!"

"Lawdee, Sis' Hunter," said Ethey, getting up quickly, "aint dat ole Uncle Harrison goin' home wif he load of poles, an' he ole crooked-footed mule? Now jes aint dat ole mule a caution! Don't he make you laugh, Sis' Hunter?"

"Well, now, honey, I could laugh maybe, ef I didn't know 'at dat ole sway-backed horse an' crooked-footed mule wuz all de team Uncle Harrison is got to haul his fire-wood an' make him a few pennies. But, honey, don't you redecule mules, 'cause mules wuz ve'y honored in Bible times. Why, mules has had visions an' saw angels! One time a ve'y weaked king wuz ridin' a mule goin' up to Damascus to persecute Gawd's people, an' when he got to de big gate 'at went into de city de mule wheeled 'roun' an' wouldn't go. His marster beat him on de haid, an' he wheeled 'roun' an' run up 'ginst a high wall an' mashed de King's foot. How come de mule to act up so? He saw a angel in de gateway wif a flamin' sward, but his marster didn't see it—you see, de mule wuz permitted a vision 'at wuz denied his marster on 'count of his weakenedness. Well, de marster kep' beatin' de po' mule over de haid tell Gawd give de mule lang'age to express his thoughts in words; an' he spoke up to his marster an' tole him 'bout de angel an' de flamin' sward tell it so tarryfy him 'at he turn from his

weakedness an' wuz cornverted to Gawd. Now, who but Gawd, chile, could turn a mule into a 'vangelis' to bring sinners into de fold? Now, wuzn't dat a great cornsideration to show a mule? An' when our Lawd an' Savior wuz heah on earth, chile, He didn't have any yuther kinder ridin' horse but a mule. He rode a mule when He fled from de weakened king into Egypt, an' when He made his march of triumph into de city of Jarushalem, He rode a mule. So, you see, Gawd honors de ve'y humbles' of his creatures. Some people say mules is kin to colored people, but dey isn't, honey; no mule what ever wuz generated aint none of our kinpeople. So don't open yo' eyes an' snurl yo' nose lack you want to scorn 'em.

"Well," as Ethey moved toward the gate, "ef you mus' go, come back agin soon, fuh you is a great cornsolation to my min'.

"My good Lawd up in heaven," said Aunt Vesta, resting her head in her hands when Ethey had gone, "ef dat chile havn't got de most argy-fyin' mind I ever did heah tell of! Why, I has to ramsack my min' answerin' dem questions tell I feel lack I done a week's washin'! Well, I do hope an' pray to de good Lawd 'at she'll git de right answers to all her questions an' git in de right path."

## CHAPTER V

Malinda was in the kitchen ironing. Ethey, at a small box near, was ironing the kitchen towels. She often begged to be allowed to help, and sometimes her mother would permit it, if she had the time to improvise a table and could spare one of the small irons. Malinda was singing in a clear, full voice:

De song er salvation is a mighty sweet song,  
An' de paradise win's blow fuh an' blow strong,  
An' Abraham's bosom hits deep an' hits wide,  
An' dat am de place where de sinner ought to hide.

A shadow fell across the floor. She looked up and saw Aunt Tildy Tuncil in the doorway. "Good evenin', Mrs. Tuncil," said Malinda, "come in an' take a cheer. I's mighty glad to see you. I wuz jes singin' to keep from gettin' lonesome. What's de good word wif you?"

"I don't know as I has any," said Aunt Tildy, as she took the chair, from which Malinda had just removed a tin can, a stove-lifter and a few other kitchen utensils which had a short time before been taking part in one of Ethey's improvised church-festival disturbances. "I jes met Mr. Johnson goin' home, an' he wuz bowin' to de right an' de lef'. He wave his han' at me, an' he say, 'Good mornin', Auntie.'"

"He do git turble tipsy sometimes," said Malinda, "but he keep his high-up place in de church

all de same, an' he aint ne'er goin' to git turned out fuh it, neither."

"Well," said Aunt Tilda, "I heyard a white lady say 'at he haf to drink to live. She say 'at he have a rebel bullet in his lef' lung, an' 'at he haf to drink to keep dat bullet a-floatin'. 'At ef he wuz to stop drinkin', dat bullet would sink into his lungs an' he'd be daid in no time." Malinda, bursting into a loud laugh, threw herself across the ironing table and began pounding it with her forehead. "Now, jes don't white folks' 'scuses fuh rich men's weakedness kill you?" Then, as she went, half bent with laughter, to the stove for a hot iron:

"Yas'm, he raise too many fine thin's on dat farm of his to ever git turned out er de church fuh gittin' tipsy. - But dat bullet! My goodness, gracious me! Aint dat 'nough to make de good Lawd in heaven bus' His sides laughin'! Yas'm, fine fruit an' chickens, an' old country ham kin give mos' anybody a good standin' in de church. It props 'em up so 'at folks can't see 'em stagger. Mos' ev'ry week, when I live at his preacher's house, he use to come an' bring 'em fruit an' watermillens, an' I ne'er is knowd de whiskey on his bref to keep dat preacher from callin' him 'Brother.'"

"White folks is jes spilt," said Aunt Tildy. "Dey has been fixin' up thin's to suit dey own stan'pint, tell dey jes can't he'p gittin' thin's a little crooked.

"Yonder is de ensho'ence man," she continued, pointing to the street. "He'll be in here in a

minnit. I jes pay him my 'sessment at my gate as I started up heah. Ca'line Steele done stop payin' on hern. She say 'at she aint goin' to pay out all 'at she kin rake an' scrape to buggy-ride all dese niggers out to de cemetery an' back when she die."

"Now, jes aint dat lack Ca'line, not to want to give nobody no enjoyment," said Malinda, laughing.

"De ensho'ence man tole her 'at she wuz boun' to lose all 'at she done pay, but she say 'at she didn't keer, fuh de mo' she pay de mo' she lose, an' she is goin' to stop it right now."

At this moment the insurance man came up, received the ten cents weekly payment from Malinda and crossed the lawn to a neighboring kitchen. "I's payin' dis ensho'ence on Ethey," said Malinda, glancing toward Ethey, who had forgotten her ironing and was standing with her elbow on the table, her chin resting on her hand and her great eyes wide open, listening attentively to the conversation. "I's so 'fraid 'at I won't be able to raise her—she's so weakly an' nervis—an' I do want to be able to lay her away decent ef she die. But it do drain me to have to pay forty cents a month out er my wages, 'specially in winter times, when cloze cos' mo'. Now 'at summer is come, it won't be so hard on me."

"Life ensho'ence is fine," said Aunt Tildy, "when'er I goes to see a colored person what's sick, I al'ays axes fuss thin' is dey ensho'd? Georgia Stuart gave her son a fine fune'al, didn't she?"

"Endeed, she did," said Malinda, "an' she spent all dat ensho'ence on dat fune'al, too; but Mrs. Smith didn't."

"Didn't she?" asked Aunt Tildy, in feigned surprise."

"No'm, she tole Brother Tolton 'at her husban' wuz daid, but 'at she have to live, an' he mus' 'vide dat ensho'ence wif her."

"Uh-uh!" said Aunt Tildy, "take keer fuh ole Mrs. Smith's long haid! Den she tuck her part er dat ensho'ence to give her daughter a birthday dinner, didn't she?"

"Yas'm," said Malinda, "but she didn't make much out er dat birthday dinner. I heyard Sallie say 'at mos' er de presents come off de ten-cent counter at de 'Racket.'"

"Oh, pshaw!" said Aunt Tildy, "I done foun' out long ago 'at birthday dinners don't pay, 'cause folks al'ays eats mo' en de price of de present dey brings, an' dey al'ays bring a lot er rubbish what folks don't need an' can't use. Bes' thin' git what you need, ef you got de money, an' don't you worry you min' 'bout birthday dinners."

"Now, yo' head is level, Mrs. Tuncil! 'Side, it's well 'nough not to be beholdin' to colored people, fuh you know how dey is?"

"I jes reckon I does. But has you noticed dem clouds flyin' over de sun ev'ry little while? It's goin' to rain 'fore night, an' I has to go through town."

"Don't hurry yo'se'f. 'Sides, you might skeer de rain away, an' we needs it, it's so hot an' close.



Did you 'tend de Queen Easter Leap Year Supper las' night?"

"No'm, I didn't," said Aunt Tildy, very emphatically. "Dey wanted me to go an' take a man. You know, dey wanted ev'rybody to take somebody else's husban', jes fuh a change. But I tell you now 'at I didn't have no idee er doin' it. Take a man an' pay ten cents fuh him at de do', den pay fuh his supper, when I aint got no idee how much he's goin' to eat! Why, he might eat a dollar's worth jes to worry me! No'm, I's no spring chicken to git cot in a box lack dat!" Here Aunt Tildy, hearing a far-off rumble of thunder, hurriedly made her adieu, leaving Malinda beating an encore on the ironing table at this thrust at the colored gentlemen.

As Aunt Tildy left, Ethey followed her to the gate. As she was returning to the house, seeing Mrs. Gilmore on the porch, she went up and sat down on the stone step near her. She sat still and said nothing, but from time to time drew her hand slowly across her head. Finally, Mrs. Gilmore asked her what the birds were talking about.

"Oh," she replied with a sigh, "I has sich a turble haidache 'at I doesn't feel lack listenin' to birds' foolishness."

"Why, you musn't have the headache here in this big yard, where there are so many trees full of birds getting ready for housekeeping, and old Mr. Grasshopper cutting up his monkey-shines! Tell that old headache to go away. Run out in the yard and don't think about it."

"Yas'm, I knows I oughter; but when my head aches so bad, I can't think 'at it don't, fuh it do. I's a mighty sick little colored girl, an' sometimes I's 'fraid I ain't goin' to live very long."

"Oh, yes, you are," said Mrs. Gilmore. "You must go out and listen to the bugs and birds, and tell me more stories." But Ethey insisted that when her head ached so bad she could not listen to any bug or bird foolishness.

A short time after this conversation big drops of rain began to fall and Mrs. Gilmore moved to the inside corner of the porch. Ethey followed. Throwing herself on her hands and knees, she remained quiet for a moment, looking into a bed of violets near the porch and watching the rain-drops fall upon the blooms. Presently she began talking to them in a half-caressing tone:

"What you holdin' yo' little haid down, cryin' 'bout, little blue fuhgitsmenot? Don't you min' dat ole rain. Is he done throw mud on you? Jes hol' up yo' little haid an' don't you min' him. He can't hurt a pretty little blue fuhgitsmenot lack you. Dare now, didn't I tell you? Where is all dat mud he done throw on you? All gone, aint it? All you got to do is to hol' up yo' little haid, an' ole rain will wash all de mud off hese'f.

"Don't you be skeerd er nuffin doin' you dirty. Nuffin can't hurt a nice, sweet, pretty little blue fuhgitsmenot lack you. Oh, you say 'at you isn't 'fraid er de rain doin' you dirty, 'at you is cryin' 'cause you is 'fraid yo' sister is goin to die? Well, she do look puny, but she'll be better in de mornin'. De rain will make her feel mo' pearter.

But ef her time done come, an' she haf to die, you can't he'p it. Is she ensho'ed? She is, is she? Oh, well, den, ef she is ensho'ed you kin git her laid away decent. You kin git her a nice little white coffin, linded wif white satin an' flowers, an' you kin have a big fune'al wif lots er fine carr'ages, an' you kin ride in a carr'age yo'se'f. But don't you stint dat fune'al to git you a fine organ, lack little ole Mrs. Blue Jay done when her husban' die. Ole Mrs. Blue Jay have a long haid on her, I'm come to tell you."

Soon the wind blew great sheets of rain into the faces of the occupants of the porch and they were forced to go into the house.

"Uh-uh! Uh-uh!" said Ethey, going to the sitting-room window, "but Gawd cert'n'y do have rain an' to spare up dare now! How come you reckon He wait so long when He have it so plentiful, an' we been needin' it so long? What you reckon' He keep it in up dare? I'll bet He's got de sky full an' lets us have what runs over de sides. But, sholy, He wouldn't be so greedy an' savin' as to let our gardens an' vegeturbles git dried up when He have it to spare, an' you an' me wuz needin' it so. Why, we wuz jes wilted down our own se'ves!

"Oh, but it's comin' down good an' plenty now! You an' me feels mo' pearter, too, don't we? Who you reckon' Gawd have to help him water dis earf? Don't you know it mus' be a big job? Maybe He makes de sky-man he'p Him. Dey is a sky-man up dare I know, 'cause I's saw him lots er times walkin' on de sky. Pete say to

me: 'You is a fool gal—'taint nothin' but clouds floatin' 'roun' up in de sky'; but I know better. I know a man's shape when I see it, even if he is walkin' up in de sky. I know Gawd mus' make dat ole man he'p Him, 'cause don't you make me he'p you water de rose-bushes? But don't you reckin it mus' take a good big sprinkler to sprinkle dis great big worl', 'cause de worl' is 'nough bigger en dis town. You an' me has traveled 'roun' 'nough to know dat. But dem big ole sprinklers mus' be somethin' turble to hol'! Now, maybe dey hitches dem sprinklers to charrets an' sky-carr'ages, 'cause co'se dey mus' put dem charrets to some yuther use en packin' flames to light people's way up to heaven. You know dat young man what have dat runaway up in de sky, when he drive de charret to wake up de sun? Maybe —

"Uh-uh! But dey's gittin' busy up dare now! Dey have a move on 'em! Why, I kin see dem charrets an' sprinklers flyin' in ev'ry direction! Why, Miss, day fairly kervorts in de sky!

"But won't you please look at dat riber flowin' down de middle of de street! Don't dat look lack ole Mr. Norey's flood wuz comin' back to drownd us all agin? Look at dem ole men runnin' in dis rain! Well, men, you has a move on you, too, hasn't you? An' I do b'lieve in my soul 'at you is mouthin' 'bout dis rain! What you mean, men?" indignantly. "You, been fussin' 'bout dis dry weather, an' you done been wantin' rain, an' now you got it, you don't want it. You is jes lack de male sect—don't want what you got.

Go 'long dare an' shet up! How kin Gawd wait tell you all gits home an' in de house to start dem rain charrets 'roun' when dey is so many of you people squirmin' 'roun' lack a lot er ants 'roun' a ant-hill? Shet up, I say, an' go 'long dare! Don't be so 'tickler 'bout you cloze. Ef you is so skeerd of a little rain, why don't you come in somebody's house?

"Oh, lookie, Miss, 'at dat wagin load er little chilluns lookin' lack little drowned rats! An', please, ma'm, see how dey got dey little ole moufs stretched. Dey mus' think 'at dis ole rain is funny. Dey isn't werryin' 'bout dey cloze. Dey havn't got sense 'nough to be skeerd 'bout dis ole rain. I'll bet you little chatterin' baboons haven't ever heyard tell er dat big ole rain what drowned dis worl' once-t, er you wouldn't be so gaily. I wish I could find a dry spot in dat wagin fuh a minnit; I'll bet I'd make you.kids' eyes bug out fuh once-t in yo' life-times.

"Uh-uh! Uh-uh! Look at de trees! But, trees, you's even bowin' down to dis big rain. Tryin' to ac' gaily, aint you—flourishin' you arms in de air, tendin' lack you's shoutin'. You's shakin' up Mrs. Pecker-wood's house, aint you? Well, ole lady, you's layin low fuh once-t—I don't see you wif you shoulders hike up, as Sis' Hunter say, walkin' so uppish on de sides er dat ole trees. I'll bet you's prayin' to Gawd, fuh once-t, not to let dis ole rain turn into Mr. Norey's flood an' sweep you an' yo' little chillun pecker-woods away. You think it look lack a cyclone, don't you, Mrs. Pecker-wood? I'll bet you do!

"Lawdee! Lawdee!" as peal after peal of thunder reverberated through the air, "now, what kin Gawd have up dare to make all dat racket wif? Don't you know he mus' have ammernition up dare. Mr. Johnson say He mus' have some kinder ammernition up dare, 'cause he kin smell de powder. An' he say dese storms remin's him of war times an' fightin'. An' he say some sorter bullets mus' pierce de sky to let de rain fall through. But ole Aunt Susannah say 'at Jim Johnson don't know nothin' 'tall 'bout what Gawd do, 'cause he aint nothin' but a fiddler an' de rankes' of sinners. But I don't b'lieve 'at Gawd have it in fuh Mr. Johnson jes 'cause he kin play lively tunes on de fiddle, an' I don't b'lieve 'at Gawd is goin' to spite me 'cause me an' my doll gits enjoyment dancin' a little on de sidewalk in front of he house. Pete say 'at sometime Satan is goin' to ketch me down dare wif my feet crossed an' goin' to lassu me an' carry me off to torment.

"Uh-uh!" going closer to the window, "but dare goes drowned rats fuh you! Now, don't you know, you imps done been baptised fuh once-t! Look, Miss, please, at dat little nappy-haired nigger. Now, aint she a sight! Don't she look lack dat little drowned dommernicker chicken? I wants to stan' right in front er dis winder, jes as onconcerned as I kin, jes to rile her. Oh, but I knows how to make her eyeballs roll!" said Ethey, chuckling with great satisfaction as the little colored children passed on. "Miss, she is de little imp of Satan I fit. Called me white folks' pet nigger, dare me to hit her, an' say to

me, 'Whoever takes a dare will kill a sheep an' eat dey hair!' Gent'men, I couldn't take dat offen nobody; so I march right up to her an' I hit her—*plank*—on de haid. She grabs me by de plat an' I grabs her by de nose, an' I hel' on tell de blood squirt. When de blood squirt, she let go my plat an' I let go her nose. But, Miss, I do b'lieve on my soul ef Pete hadn't part us I'd been fightin' her tell now. Can't you see, Miss, what comes er my peaceful, happy thoughts when I'm al'ays in a ruxion?—an' my color doin' all dey kin to rile me!

"Heah comes de sunshine! Oh, but I do trus' an' pray it will be moonlight tonight! I do feel so squirmish settin' in dis big yard in de night-times when I can't see what's in de big shadows. Sometimes I thinks I kin see thin's movin' an' flourishin' dey arms in de air an' wavin' to me. Den I gits skeerd er dem big pine trees, when I has no idee what may be behin' 'em. Pete say 'at he heyard chains rattlin' dare one night, an' felt a hot breath comin' from dare, an' he say 'at dark corners harbors haints. Sis' Hunter say 'at Furginia use to be full er haints. She say she isn't ever saw many haints heah, but she say in Furginia de very air wuz 'live wif haints. She say she use to feel a hot breath most any time dare, an' she say she have heyard pigs squeel 'long de roadsides when dey wuzn't no pigs dare 'tall.

"An' way down South conjurers! Sis' Hunter say dey isn't no mo' conjurers down South en heah; but Aunt Lucy Woods, what nurse yo' papa, say dey wuz. She say 'at a man conjured her

cape one time in de South, an' she say when she didn't have on dat cape she jes hated dat nigger; but soon as she put on dat cape, she love dat nigger tell she'd feel 'at she sholy would perish ef she didn't git to see him. But haints is one thin' I pray de good Lawd will keep fuh from me! But, Miss, do you know lots er times when I'm right in de bed wif mama I gits skeered of haints. I git so busy in de night times fixin' up dem stories 'bout dem lions an' bears fuh you 'at I can't, not to save my soul, go to sleep. I looks over by de winder an' I sees somethin' white, an' I thinks it's a haint; an' I grabs mama by de back an' wakes her up, an' she gits mad at me an' say:

"What's de matter wif you, gal? Dat isn't no haint. Keep still an' go to sleep, an' don't be clammin' up my back. I aint no 'simmon tree.'

"But I natchully loves de moonlight. I'm lack Sis' Hunter—she say de moonlight makes her soul feel so trankill an' so sorrowful, too. But, Miss, don't you know one person 'at gits moonlight 'nough, an' dat is dat ole man up in de moon. Don't you know 'at his eyesight mus' be dazzled lots er times by de brightness of dat moon! An' can't he git plenty er enjoyment out of life watchin' people down heah? Don't you know, dey can't nobody in dis worl' step dey foot out of doors but he sees 'em. An', Miss, don't you know dat ole gent'man kin even glimpse de actions of angels up in heaven. I know he could tell who drive de rain-charrets an' who wakes up de sun. I'll bet he aint green 'bout Gawd, neither. He could tell a heap, I know; but I couldn't—not to



save my soul—he’p bein’ a little skittish ’bout him. Why, ef I knowd he wuz out at de big gate, an’ have a turble big yarn to spin me, I’d be skeered to go out dare. He might ’pear lack a haint. But,” after a moment. “I’m thinkin’ I’d go out dare a minnit anyhow, jes fuh cur’osity, as Sis’ Hunter say.

“Sis’ Hunter say ’at she wouldn’t min’ goin’ up to heaven ef she didn’t know it would be fuh good an’ all time. She say, ef she could come back jes once-t an’ tell people ’bout dem golden streets an’ de sights up in heaven, she wouldn’t mind it so much; she might be willin’ to go back to stay. But Sis’ Hunter is ve’y changeful an’ lacks to keep on a move. But, Miss, ef people aint goin’ to res’ corntented up in heaven, where is dey goin to res’ corntented? Mama say Sis’ Hunter would want to backslide from heaven fuh a change. Don’t you know, Miss, ’at Injuns will feel lack dey is in de lock-up ef dey ever gits to go to heaven? But, don’t you know, Miss, dey mus’ be some big woodses somewheres up in heaven? I’m mos’ sho dey is.”

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“Gal,” said Malinda to Ethey the morning after the rain, “you better go see ef Miss have anythin’ fuh you to do in de house. Dat rain done settle de dust in de big road, so it won’t be long befo’ dat phaeton will be hitched up, an’ dey isn’t no tellin’ who may git a chance to ride out in de country.”

“Dat’s so!” replied the child, getting up quickly and leaving the kitchen.

"Now, Miss," said she to Mrs. Gilmore, going hurriedly into the sitting-room, dust-cloth in hand, "dat rain done burnis' up de trees an' grass an' set ev'rythin' to shinin', as Sis' Hunter say, an' I know dis furniture is plum 'shamed of itse'f. I'm goin' to work lack a tow-haid, tell I works a merical on dis room. But, Miss, do you know 'at it's so much harder fuh me to dus' cheers an' pianer lags en it is books? Mus' be 'cause I gits mo' enjoyment out er books; fuh when I jes brist de leaves, dey fly open an' I glimpse dem merical pictures. Now dis," going to the table and taking up and opening a book, "is de book what have dat ole golden tetch man in it. An' ef heah aint dat ole man, dis minnit, divin' down in de riber to git water offen de very bottom of de riber to sprinkle he little girl chile, to turn her from gold into a humant. Now, jes don't dat ole gent'man look gaily," smiling and drawing down the corners of her mouth, "divin' down in dat riber! 'Spossen he wuz to jump down a whale's throat! You wants to change yo'se'f into a fish, don't you, ole gent'man? Men isn't much diffienter en fish, my gran'mama say, 'cause dey kin swim an' dive in de water ef dey wants to. An' she even say a man has been knowd to live on de inside of a fish. She say dat ole Bible whale 'at swallowed Mr. Jonus wuz a fish. But, Lawdee, Miss, dat wuzn't a circusstance to time dey wuz a whale heah! Yas'm, whales comes to dis town, an' dey isn't beholdin' to no riber! No'm, dey travels on de railroad. One time I recollect's a turble big whale heah! Oh, it wuz

a lots bigger en dis house, an' dey wuz lots of men an' women an' little chilluns walkin' 'roun' him, an' he open he mouf to gap an' dey all went in dare to look aroun', an' he shet he mouf!"

"Mercy!" exclaimed Mrs. Gilmore, in surprise, "did he swallow them all down and kill them?"

"No'm, dey jes wait tell he gape agin, den dey all rund out."

"Did the people go in with their clothes on?"

"Yas'm, dey wuz dressed to kill, an' dey all have dey umbrelles raised, an' wuz carryin' big palm-leaf fans—but, Miss, don't you think you house would be mo' up to da' ef you'd deckerate dat grate wif nigger huids?"

"It might, but I'd hate to cut the heads off so many little niggers. It would take so many to fill the grate."

"Why, Miss, dey isn't sho 'nough! You doesn't have to cut de huids offen no little colored chillun," in great surprise. "Why, dey is flowers, an' blooms 'long de roadsides; dey is black in de centers wif yellor all 'round 'em. I reckon de perlice would git us ef we wuz to cut de huids off sho 'nough little colored chilluns. Lawdee, Miss, you do make me laugh!" putting the back of her hand to her mouth. "Ef ever a white lady needed travelin' 'roun' in de country you do. Why, you havn't saw half dey is to see. Injuns is turble roamers, you know, an' my Injun blood keeps me on de move. You'll need dem flowers dis day, an' you jes make Pete hitch up de phaeton an' we'll go git 'em. Miss, you don't make dat lazy Pete work half lack you oughter."

You oughter make him hitch up de phaeton, rain or shine; 'cause ef we changes our min' an' don't want to go drivin', you kin make him onhitch it, an' he'll be workin' an' earnin' his salt, at leas'. I am goin' to pray from now on tell we starts 'at no white lady won't come to dis house to keep you an' me at home; 'cause white ladies needs glimpses of de country same as colored people. You can't view de sky from inside de house, an' you can't half heah de birds sing.

"Uh-uh! Uh-uh, boy!" turning and looking through the open window at a little coal-black boy riding an old white horse. "I thought that was you, long mouf! You feel yo'se'f ve'y gran—don't you—settin' up on dat ole crow-bait horse! You thinks you's de *president*, don't you? Miss, dat's Jimmy Towles. Has you any idee what kinder spurs he wears to make dat ole horse plinch, an' take up fuss one foot den de yuther an' switch dat ole tail so lively? Why, he sticks pins in he little ole black heels an' makes lack dey is spurs—he ole heels so tough! I tole him he wuz mighty hard up fuh spurs fuh anybody so lawdly lookin', an' I ax him wuzn't it mighty hard on he heels, an' he tole me to shet up.

"But he kin make you laugh. He kin do a lots er thin's. He kin crow lack a rooster, an' cackle lack a hen, an' bark lack a dog, an' he kin go terzackly lack a caliope, playin' 'Sawnee River.' Ef you wuz to heah him, you would think 'at de show have cert'n'y done come an' de perade wuz marchin' 'roun' de square. But Miss Ella say 'at he is mighty green 'bout Gawd. Do you know

what he done one time? Well, I'll tell you. He come to Sunday-school one time, an' Miss Ella say to him:

"'Jimmy, do you know who made de sun, an' de moon, an' de stars an' de pretty blue sky?"

"He say, jes as quick: 'Yas'm, Gawd, He made 'em.'

"Den she say: 'An' do you know who made de trees an' grass an' all de pretty flowers?"

"An' he say, jes as quick agin: 'Yas'm, de debel, he make 'em.'

"Miss Ella is so 'shamed 'at she don't know what to do, an' she say: 'Why, Jimmy, isn't you 'shamed er yo'se'f to tell a story lack dat in de church? You know 'at you know better en to think 'at de ole debel make all de pretty trees an' grass an' flowers.'

"But he say: 'No'm, I clare 'fore Gawd 'at I thunk it. I thunk 'at Gawd, He make de sky an' de sun an' de moon an' de stars, an' shot 'em down, an' 'at ole debel he make de trees an' de grass an' de flowers, an' shot 'em up.'

"Miss Ella couldn't he'p from laughin'; but she tole him 'at de heathens in Aferka would er knowd better en dat."

Suddenly a loud chattering of birds was heard in the yard, and before any one could inquire the cause Ethey, leaning from the front window, exclaimed:

"Lawdy, Miss, but won't you, please, ma'm, listen to dem jay-birds' racket. Lawdee, mercee! De trees is jes lineded wif 'em. Ef dat don't beat de beaters! Heah dey done come an' brung

dey whole congeration, an' done opened up dey pertracted meetin' right in yo' front yard. Now, please, ma'm, havn't dey de imp'dence er de ve'y Ole Nick hisse'f! Lawdy, but dey done all come fruh at once-t. Did you ever heah so much racket in all yo' born days? Well, jay-birds sho is colored, 'cause dey makes so much racket wif dey 'ligion. Mr. Johnson say 'at niggers' 'ligion is mos'ly racket. Uh-uh!" kneeling at the window, her hand over her mouth, as she looked up at the trees, "dey all done come fruh at once-t, an' all tryin' to tell dey 'sperence at once-t. How long you think dat 'ligion goin' to las' you all? I'll bet it won't be a week 'fore you'll be jes as loud-moufed an' cussin' as ef you ne'er did come fruh. But you do make me laugh. Well, white folks laughs at colored folks shoutin', an' I reckon colored folks kin laugh at jay-birds shoutin'.

"But, look, Miss, now some of dem jay-birds mus' be seekers! Sho as you is born dey is goin' up to de mourners' bench. See how dey lights down from dat tree an' crains dey necks an' bows down in dat grass! Why, co'se dey is seekers! An' won't you look at dem sinners on dat high lim'! Now, can't you see dey is makin' fun? Co'se dey is; dey is redeculin dem sinner jay-birds fuh wantin' to git cornverted. New, jes aint dat lack up in de gallery at de colored church?

"Take keer! Take keer! Uh-uh! Bound fuh you! Dare goes dat Pete wif a hoe. Oh, yas, co'se he's goin' to break up dat meetin'. Nobody ain't 'lowd no liberty in dis yard. He own it, 'cause once-t an' awhile he pulls a weed up in

it." Suddenly, in great excitement: "What's he hittin'? What's he hittin'? Lawdee, Lawdee! What's he got on dat hoe? Please, ma'm, see ef it aint a great big snake. I'll bet it is a blue racer. So he'p me Lawdy, aint I glad I'm in dis house; he'd try to put it on me. Dare goes mama out dare—I kin go now—an', Miss," turning in the doorway, "I'll come back an' tell you all de 'ticklers.

"Well, Miss," said Ethey when she returned, "dat cert'ny wuz a turble lookin' snake. An' has you any idee what he wuz doin'? Why, charmin' dem birds! De ole rascal wuz layin' dare stretched straight out, an' dem birds kep' gittin' closter an' closter to him, an' ef Pete hadn't er been so bricketty, we might er saw him swallow one. Den, co'se, Pete could er killed him an' cut him open an' let out de bird."

After recovering from the excitement of the killing of the snake Ethey worked industriously for some time, dusting chairs, tables and piano legs, and emptying the scrap-basket. When she had put the room in order, seeing Mrs. Gilmore seated at the sewing table, she asked that she might be allowed to finish assorting and stringing the buttons—a task she had begun several days before. When she had been thus occupied for a short time she began laughing softly to herself. Presently she asked Mrs. Gilmore if she had ever told her of the racket that Mrs. White Snake and Mrs. Black Snake had one time. As the lady, of course, had never heard it, Ethey proceeded:

"Well, you see, Mrs. White Snake live upon a

high hill under de trees, wif green grass all 'roun', an' Mrs. Black Snake, she live down in de gulley, wif lots of high weeds an' black mud, wif frog holes in it. Mrs. White Snake done git mad at her cook an' done driv' her off, an' right soon after she done driv' off her cook, her sister writ her a letter an' tole her 'at she wuz comin' to see her. She never knowd what to do, so she went crawlin' on down to Mrs. Black Snake's house. Mrs. Black Snake, she done git up early dat mornin', an' done cook her breakfas', an' done sent all her little chillun snakes to school. An' she done wash her close, an' done spread 'em on de weeds to dry. An' she done stretch herse'f in de sunshine to res' herse'f. Mrs. White Snake, she went crawlin' on up to Mrs. Black Snake, an' she say to her, jes as pleasant:

"'Good mornin', Black Snake. Does you want to hire?'

"'I don't know'm,' Mrs. Black Snake say, 'I isn't thought nothin' tall 'bout hirin', but I might hire, jes fuh a change. I has got fo' washin's. How much do you give?'

"'I give two dollars a week,' say Mrs. White Snake, 'ef cook do washin' an' ironin'; but ef I has to put out de washin', I gives a dollar an' a half.'

"'Well, I reckon' I'll hire,' say Mrs. Black Snake.

"'Well,' say Mrs. White Snake, 'den you come up in de mornin' an' git breakfas'.' Den Mrs. White Snake goes crawlin' on up de hill to her house.



"Mrs. Black Snake gits up early nex' mornin' an' crawls on up to Mrs. White Snake's house, an' gits a awful good breakfas'. She stay a week an' cook fuh Mrs. White Snake, an' when Mrs. White Snake's sister done went home, Mrs. White Snake goes out in de kitchen an' goes to fussin' at Mrs. Black Snake, an' she say 'at Mrs. Black Snake can't cook, no-how. Den Mrs. Black Snake say:

" 'Well, ef you don't lack my cookin', I kin quit.'

" 'Well, you kin quit,' Mrs. White Snake say to her, 'but I aint goin' to pay you no money, fuh you aint worf it. I wouldn't er got you in de fuss place ef I hadn't er been in a pinch.'

" 'Well,' says Mrs. Black Snake, 'I'll go ax yo' husban' fuh my money.'

"Mrs. White Snake, she goes in de house, an' ting-a-ling-a-ling goes de telephome, an' she say:

" 'Ef Black Snake come up dare fuh money, don't you give her no money, fuh I don't owe her none.'

"But Mrs. White Snake's husban' aint in de sto'. Mrs. Black Snake crawl on up to de sto', an' she curl up 'hin' de do', an' when Mrs. White Snake's husban' come in, she crawl up to him an' say:

" 'I's come fuh my money, please, sir.'

"An' he say: 'How much is it?'

"An' she say: 'Two dollars,' an' he pay her. Den ting-a-ling-a-ling goes de telephome agin, an' it's Mrs. White Snake, telephomin' her husban' not to pay Mrs. Black Snake no money. But

Mrs. Black Snake done got her money, an' done crawl on out on de street."

When she had finished, she tucked her head and laughed immoderately, with the backs of her hands over her mouth.

## CHAPTER VI

"Etthey, you's so fond er goin' to see Sis' Hunter, you kin take dis basket er sawdust an' go git them fraish aiggs fuh de circus-day cake. Saturday is show day, you know, an' tomorrow is Friday, an' dat cake mus' be made fuss thing in de mornin'. Git on yo' hat an' start after 'em. I know what a dilly-dallyer you is when you go to anybody's house, 'specially ef dey has a glib tongue lack Sis' Hunter; so, you see, I have give you plenty of time to git 'em heah by tomorrow morning. Tell her 'at Miss wants de aiggs fuh de circus-day cake, an' ask her, ef she please, ma'm, to pack 'em keerful in de sawdust so you can't rattle 'em or break 'em. Mr. Johnson lives on the way dere, an' you know we can't trus' you in de neighborhood er dat fiddle wif a bucket er aiggs without takin' many percautions. But don't you think it's a little warm to wear yo' cloak?" said the mother, laughing, seeing that the child was buttoning on a new cloak given her the day before.

"Well, I don't know'm. Maybe I better be keerful 'bout ketchin' col'. You know I sneeze dis mornin', an' dey is no tellin' when anybody is goin' to ketch dey deaf er col'."

"Dat's so. Go on, chile. I have heyard 'at pride kin keep you warm; I reckon it kin keep you cool, too."

"I have come fuh de fraish aiggs fuh de circus-

day cake, Sis' Hunter" said Etthey to Aunt Vesta, after the usual greetings. "An' mama say, please ma'm, pack 'em very keerful in dis sawdust 'at I brung, 'cause she wuz so 'fraid 'at Mr. Johnson's fiddle might tickle my heels on my way home an' make a ruxion in de tin bucket."

"Dat's wise, honey, 'cause aiggs is lack bad chillun—dey kin sometimes scrap over very slight provocations. But set down an' pay me a little visit, can't you, honey? Yo' mammy didn't say fuh you to come right back, did she?"

"No'm, she don't need de aiggs tell tomorrow—dat's why she sent me today."

"Well, yo' mammy is wise dare, too, 'cause she knows how you an' me rambles on in our cornversations an' fuhgits how time passes."

"Endeed she do! But, Sis' Hunter, I do wush 'at I didn't have to pass by Aunt Susannah William's when I comes to see you. Awhile ago she looked out at de winder at me an' say:

"'Hi, dare goes Miss High-an'-Mighty, goin' down to see Sis' Hunter an' tell her all dey is to know.' An' when she saw 'at I have dis nice cloak, she holler an' laugh, an' say: 'I had no idee it wuz so col' today. Mary, ef you goes up town today, don't you fuhgit to wrap up yo' yeahs.'"

"Dat's a nice cloak, honey, an' you has reason to be proud, an' greatful, too, an' you has a right to wear it ef you wants to, even ef de win' isn't blowin' off er icicles. Don't pay no 'tention to what she say, honey."

"Oh, I doesn't," said Ethey, with an independent toss of the head. "I ne'er let on 'at I heah her. I jes walk on by lookin' at her hollyhocks an' butterflies, an' I say to myse'f: 'Lawdy, ole lady, you ought to see thin's 'at will make you happy, enstead er workin' yo'se'f up to sich a high pitch 'cause I holds a high haid an' have dis nice cloak."

"You sho has remarked a besettin' sin er po' humants, both black an' white, chile. It do seem 'at so often dey won't enjoy what dey has dey-se'ves 'cause dey is so mad at yuther people fuh havin' somethin'.. Honey, has you been lookin' at de show bills much?"

"Endeed I has, Sis' Hunter, an' I hopes to be early an' late on dem show grounds. You don't reckon dey is any danger er dem Injuns gittin' on a tare show day an' doin' up dis town, do you? Pete say 'at dey will paint de town red when dey gits heah; but dat boy have so little entelligence, I don't pay no 'tention to what he say. You kin recollect sho 'nough ole-time Injuns way back in Furginia, Sis' Hunter, can't you?"

"Yas, honey, dey use to come to my ole Mars-ter's sellin' dey ware. Dey call dey ware pipkin ware. Dey'd have jugs an' bowls an' sich thin's, an' my white people use to buy 'em."

"Well, an' you have laughed an' talked wif sho 'nough Injuns when you was a little girl, have you, Sis' Hunter?"

"No, honey, I hasn't exactly laughed an' talked to Injuns, 'cause Injuns aint much talkers, an' I

don't b'lieve I ever did see a Injun smile. Injuns is very solemn lookin' people an' has very little to say."

"I's part Injun, Sis' Hunter, on my gran'-mama's side."

"I know it, honey, an' I is, too," said Aunt Vesta, laughing, "but nobody would think it er either one er us. We's too loquashous, as Mars' Park use to say. We mus' take our loquashousness from de colored side er de house, fuh our tongues is entirely too long fuh Injuns. Well, I reckon we has de Injun way er seein' ev'rythin', an' de colored way er not bein' able to keep from tellin' it. But, Ethey, chile, dey is one thin' I don't say nothin' 'bout, an' dat is my Injun blood; 'cause, ef I wuz to, my color would be sho to 'cuse me er conjurin'. Why, even now, honey, dey sets up an' talks at me, an' throws out slurs 'bout way down South darkies bein' quare an' critical an' workin' dey conjurin' tricks on people."

"Lawdee, Sis' Hunter, I do wish 'at you an' me *could* work conjurin' tricks on some people an' turn 'em into somethin' quare. Do you know, I'd lack to turn ole Aunt Susannah Williams into a hollyhock, jes to see Mr. an' Mrs. Bumble-Bee an' all dey kinfolks light down on her an' worry her a while. You an' me sho could have our enjoyment out er dat ole lady, ef we could do it, an' not have no great harm come to her. Jes have her come from under de spell all right, but fuh a few bumble-bee stings on de nose an' jaws. To tell de trouf, I do b'lieve it would do her good ef we could pepper her dat way jes once-t. But

it would be all day wif us ef she ever did find out who conjured her."

"Endeed it would, honey! We'd have to hunt de tall timber, sho as you's born."

"Do you know, Sis' Hunter, I mos' splits my sides sometimes 'bout how I'd lack to git even wif people when dey makes me mad. Now, dare is dat lazy, outdacious Pete! I'd lack to turn him into a 'possum, an' den call ole Benjamin Tilman an' sick him on him, an' den stan' by an' hol' my sides while dat ole dog shake an' wool him 'round some; co'se I wouldn't let him kill him, nor break no bones, but I'd lack to have him skeer him plum out er his wits. Do you know, he have de impudence to tell me 'at I talks ign-ant? Jes dis mornin' he say to me: 'You don't know how to talk proper yo'self, gal. What makes you say "he mama" an' "he papa?"' No high-learnt person don't use sich out-landish lang'age.' He do make me madder en anybody, an' I'll git even wif him ef I has to git up befo' day. He is so brickety!"

"Well, you will git enjoyment show day."

"Endeed I will, Sis' Hunter! An' I isn't skeerd er none er dem wile beastes, neither—lions, tigers er nothin'—'cause Gawd will take keer er dis town show day jes de same as yuther days—oh, I has to laugh ev'ry time I think 'bout it! Did I ever tell you 'bout de time 'at de lions tried to kill Gawd?"

"Lawdee, no, honey!" in great surprise. "How come it, pray? Do tell me."

"Wall," clearing her throat and looking around

the room "one time dey wuz some lions live down a street, clos' to where some little colored chilluns live. Well, dem little colored chillun know'd 'at ole Mr. an' Mrs. Lion have done went to de show, so dey thought 'at dey would go down dare an' play wif dem little boy an' girl lion; 'cause dey thought 'course dem little boy an' girl lion wouldn't hurt 'em. Well, dey wuz playin' an' 'joyin' deyse'ves fine, an' what you reckon' dem little boy an' girl lion do, 'thout no scuse 'tall? Why, dey jes gits mad at dem little chilluns an' goes to try to hurt 'em! Now, dat's one time when dem little boy an' girl lion didn't know what dey wuz a foolin' wif; fuh Gawd wuz lookin' down dat ve'ry minnit on dat ve'ry street where dey wuz. Yes'm, He even have done raise de winder, an' could hear ev'rythin' dem little boy an' girl lion wuz sayin'. Oh, dey wuz a feelin' turble biggity, an' dey wuz a fightin' an' a cussin' dem little chilluns jes shameful—yas'm, dat's what makes Gawd so mad. Gent'men He ne'er do nuffin but walks to His back porch, an' He gits Him a stick er stove-wood, an' He throws it down an' kill dat little boy lion—he kill bouf dem little boy an' little girl lion!—yas'm, he did! He hit de fuss one *plank* on de haid an' kill him, den de stick graze off an' hit de yuther on de haid an' kill him, too.

"Oh, but maybe ole Mr. Lion wuzn't mad when he come home from dat show! Ole Mr. Lion roll up his sleeves, an' he spit on his han's, an' he shake his fis', an' he say he goin' to kill Gawd. So he goes to walkin' an' a walkin' tell



he comes to de highes' hill he kin fin', an' he commensted to walk up dat hill, an' he keep a walkin' higher an' higher an' higher up dat hill, tell he comes to Gawd's house. An' when he gits dare, he bus' open de do' an' he march right in. Now, maybe Gawd ne'er done nothin' to him. Gawd took some er His pizen—He have it in his mouf—no, He have it in his weskit pocket—an' He throw dat in Mr. Lion's mouf, an he have ready His hot water, an' He throw dat on ole Mr. Lion. I tell you, God fixed him!"

As Ethey was entering the yard with the bucket of eggs, Pete went running across the yard after his hat, which had just been wafted away by the wind, saying:

"I do wush 'at dis ole win' would stop blowin'."

"Now, jes listen at you, boy!" said Ethey, going up to him. "Boy, doesn't you know 'at de win' have his work to do, jes de same as you?"

"No, I doesn't an' you needn't come shakin' yo' argerment finger at me. I'd lack to know what work de win' haf to do?" he continued, anxious to draw her into conversation.

"Listen to me, boy, an' time I 'gits fruh wif you you'll know somethin'. Don't you know," waving her hand and gesticulating, "'at de win' have to blow to blow de seeds off de bluegrass, to keep de weeds from fillin' up dis yard? An' de win' have to blow to blow de seeds off de little fuhgitsmenots, so 'at dey won't fuhgit to come up in de springtimes, to tell people not to fuhgit to 'tend to dey gardens an' vegiturbles. An' de

win have to blow, to blow de seeds off de maple trees, to give you somethin' to do when dey sprouts up in dis big yard. An',"—bowing low, as she drew her hand over her mouth to hide a very perceptible smile, "an' when you gits to sweatin' too much 'bout yo' job, de win' has to blow de persperation off yo' ole black face."

"I knows 'at you is crazy—I knows 'nough to know dat. An' I know 'at I has no time to be foolin' an' wastin' time in cornversation wif you, gal. I has my work to do," turning abruptly and going into the kitchen. Soon Mrs. Gilmore heard the following outburst from the kitchen:

"You mean, good-fuh-nothin' long-moufed black nigger, I's a goin' to tell Miss on you dis minnit!"

In a moment the screen door of the porch burst open and Etthey came into the yard, followed by Pete. She was holding in her hand the broken and charred pieces of a long switch such as children use for stick-horses. She was crying and wiping her eyes on the skirt of her dress. Running up to Mrs. Gilmore, she said between her sobs:

"Miss, Pete done kin'le de fire wif my swif'es race-horse—'Lightnen'—de one what I name after dat young man what tuck his father's charret an' driv' to wake up de sun dat mornin'."

"Do you mean Phaeton?" asked Mrs. Gilmore.

"Yas m, dat wuz de young man's name, but it soun' so much lack yo' surrey 'at I call my horse 'Lightnen,' 'cause lightnen' is swif', an' de lightnen' hit de young man an' knock him in de riber."

Here the recollection of the young man's calamity recalled more vividly his namesake's troubles, and in a fresh outburst at Pete she cried:

"Yas'm, he done kin'le de kitchen fire wif him, an' dis is all dey is lef' er him," holding out the broken pieces. "An' didn't I 'cuse him er it de minnit I went in dat kitchen, 'cause he look so sheepish? But he dany it; an' den I open de stove—an' dare he wuz, burnin' up!"

"Well," said Pete, looking ashamed of himself, "she knows well 'nough 'at I ne'er would er done it ef she hadn't been so fon' er knockin' me on de haid wif it, an' tellin' me to see stars an' thunder an' lightnin', too."

Mrs. Gilmore had many of these disturbances to settle. She had more than once found Ethey kneeling on Pete's back, with her long fingers clutching his hair, threatening to "peal his naps off his black haid ef he didn't stop givin' her sass." Any reflections cast by him on her fairy tales, or "make lack plays," were always designated "sass."

## CHAPTER VII

"Well, I am sho dat circus-day cake will be a success, as Miss Gertrude says, but it is a bone-breakin' business, aint it mama, to beat dem aiggs so light an' frothy?" said Ethey, as she stood watching her prepare the ingredients for the cake.

"But won't you please look at dem clouds! I do hope 'at dey'll pass by an' not come to spoil circus day."

"Oh, let it rain a little today, chile, an' it won't have to rain tomorrow."

"All right, den," said Ethey, "ef I has de say so. I'll go an' cornsult de elerments, as Sis' Hunter says." Stopping in the doorway, she added: "Save de crock fuh me, an', please, ma'm, hide it good from Pete."

As she went into the yard she saw the boy pulling plantain in the back yard. "Boy," she said, going up to him, "don't you know 'at you is got to hurry up?"

"No, I don't. What's I got to hurry up 'bout?" said he, pretending to resent her suggestion, when in reality he only wanted to encourage her to talk. "What is I got to hurry up 'bout? Is you my boss?"

"No, I isn't yo' boss, but I knows somethin' 'at maybe you isn't got in yo' black noggin'. I know 'at it's goin' to rain. Look yonder," pointing to the zig-zag lightning in the north, "don't you see

'at de sky-man have got out his six-shooter an' is shootin' holes in de sky? An' de fuss thin' 'at you know de rain will be fallin' down on you."

"De sky-man got out his six-shooter!" said he, in derision. "Where did you git all dat crazy Injun talk? What do you know 'bout de sky-man, I'd lack to know? You ne'er is been up in de sky?"

"Folks doesn't have to go up in de sky to know 'bout de sky-man's six-shooter. You talks lots 'bout torment, where you say I is goin' to some time. Is you ever been down in torment, 'at you know so much 'bout it? I know all 'bout de sky-man, an' what makes it rain. Boy, don't you know 'at I kin tell you mo' en you e'er is heyard tell of?" the 'argement' finger going, as was her custom when trying to impress the truth of her story on one. "Now, you listen to me. When de clouds gits so dry an' so hard 'at de rain won't come fruh 'em, de sky-man takes out his six-shooter an' shoots holes in 'em, so 'at de rain kin fall down on dis earf. A boy has to be mighty ign'rant not to know dat much. Uh-uh! Uh-uh! Did you heah dat pistol shot?" as a loud clap of thunder make her stop suddenly.

"Yas, I heyard dat loud clap er thunder," said the boy. "I mus' er been deaf ef I didn't."

"Dat wuzn't nuffin but de sky-man shootin' holes in de clouds, to make de rain fall down on dis earf an' give de flowers an' grass a drink er water. Boy," in great disgust, "you doesn't know no mo' 'bout dis worl' what you live in en dat

gate pos'. Where do you keep your min' at? You don't know nuffin!"

"Why, I isn't got no min'," said he, a little offended. "You is got all de min' dey is, an' you isn't lef' none fuh nobody else. Ef I didn't do nuffin but track 'roun' after white folks an' listen to dey talk, I might spin long yarns, too. But I has somethin' else to do en to set 'roun' wif my mouf wide open to ketch ev'ry word 'at falls from white folks' lips."

"Oh, shet up, boy," said she impatiently. "You wouldn't know how to ketch 'em ef you wuz to see 'em fall. 'Sides, I doesn't have to listen to white folks' talk to heah thin's. Sperets talks to me. I kin set down under dat tree an' heah mo' en you e'er is dreamt 'bout. Listen! Did you heah dat pistol shot?" Then, in great glee, pointing to the drops of rain falling on the sidewalk, "What did I tell you? Sometimes 'fore you draps daid from puah ign'ance you'll fin' out 'at I knows somethin'."

"Oh, hush up, gal! No half Injun nigger kin tell me nothin'. I am a puah onadulerated Af'kin myse'f."

"Why, boy, don't you know 'at in ole times puah onadulerated Af'kins couldn't hardly tell dey-se'ves from wile beastes?"

By this time the rain was falling fast, and as Ethey turned to run into the house great hail-stones began falling. Turning, she called to Pete:

"Run, boy! Run, er dem sky-bullets will hit you, sho! De sky-man is pintin his six-shooter

at you." Then, exultingly, "Uh-uh! Maybe Injuns don't onderstan' de elerments!"

"Well," said Malinda, as Ethey and Pete ran into the kitchen, "did you think 'at de sky-man wuz goin' to empty his hail-bank on yo' haid?"

"Hush, mama," said Ethey, "I had to tell Pete 'at dey wuz bullets from de sky-man's six-shooter befo' he could git a move on hisse'f!"

"Pshaw, gal," said he indignantly, "I have saw hailstones befo' you wuz born. Didn't my ole gran'mammy use to tell us dey wuz lemon draps, an' send us little chillun out to pick 'em up to make lemonade out er."

"Oh, boy," replied Ethey disdainfully, as she walked toward the servants' room, "you mus' learn to talk mo' up-to-da' ef you expects to hol' cornversation wif me. Why can't you say gran'mama?" Then, before he could reply, she went into the servants' room and shut and locked the door.

"Uh-uh! Take keer fuh dat chile's uppishness!" For reply, Malinda said:

"Open de do' fuh Sis' Hunter, Pete. She has been driv in by de rain.

"Come right in an' have a cheer," as Aunt Vesta entered. "You been up to git de las' glimpse er de show bills befo' de parade starts, have you?" she said, laughing.

"I started up to git me some groceries," replied Aunt Vesta, "but de rain clouds wuz nearer en I thought dey wuz."

"Do you know," said Pete, addressing Aunt Vesta, "'at folks say dat is goin' to be de grandes'

show 'at ever did strike dis town? I heyard a man say 'at it wuz goin' to have Philipipian soljurs in it."

"Philippians! Philippians in de show! Why, dey is Bible people. Well, people what thinks shows sich a turble sinful sight won't know what to think er dat. But won't dey mirate! I wonder how come it dey follows de show? Do you reckon dey done got hard up? Dey wuz great favorites er Paul in de Bible, you know."

"Yas'm, I know it," said Malinda. "I can't onderstand it."

"Dey muster had hard luck," said Pete. "You know Frank James had to follow theatres to git a lif' when he fuss give hisse'f up."

"Dat's so," cried Aunt Vesta and Malinda in a breath.

"It do seems," said Aunt Vesta, "'at Gawd sho isn't no respecter er persons when it comes to hard luck; fuh while de rain fall on de unjest same as de jest, de cyclone sweeps away de saints wif de sinners. Why, don't you know dey sometime blows down churches an' leaves saloons standin'?"

"Dat's so," said Pete. "I heyard a white man yuther day say 'at ef he wuz to see a cyclone comin', he'd run in a saloon befo' he'd set his foot inside a church do'."

"Dat's mighty quare to me how Gawd makes sinners flourish lack a green bay tree an' causes de saints to wither away. Well, there is my long tongue! I pray 'at de good Lawd will bridle it



some, fuh I often say things I better leave unsaid. But, den, dat's a failin' er po' humants."

"Endeed it is, Sis' Hunter," said Malinda.

"Well, Ethey, chile, where you been all dis time 'at I never glimpsed you befo'?"

"Oh, she slipped out er my room," said the mother, "an' squat in de corner dare soon after you come in. De hail wuz fallin' so fas' you didn't heah her, but she hasn't missed a word 'at you said."

"Now, 'fore I fuhgits it, Sis' Hunter," said Ethey, going up to Aunt Vesta, "you know all dey is to know 'bout ole-time young white ladies—kin you tell me what is a Philerpiner?"

"Why, a philerpener is a twin has'enut er a twin almon', er a twin philbert, an' people eats 'em, an' ——"

"Yas'm, dat's what Billy's gran'mama say—Billy Fuggerson an' his gran'mama mos' fit 'bout it yistiddy. Billy's gran'mama say 'at dey isn't nuffin but twin has'enuts an' philberts an' almons', an' 'at folks eats 'em an' den waits tell one er yuther er 'em say 'Yes' er 'No,' an' den whoe'er say 'philerpener' fuss gits a present—a box er candy, a pair er gloves, er what e'er dey is done 'greed on 'forehan'. But Billy, he say, no, 'at white folks' preacher say 'at dey is people—some kinder colored people, not jes lack us, but on de order er us—an' dat dey has a awful fine country what has got ev'rything 'at folks needs to make 'em rich an' gran', but dey isn't got sense 'nough to enjoy deyse'ves an' dress in style—dat dey

style aint but mighty little ahaid er dem fuss styles what Adam an' Eve wored in dat garden when dey et dem apples. An' he say 'at Gawd don't know how dey got dat country, but somehow, onbeknowns't to Him; an' he say 'at Gawd don't want 'em to have it, an' 'at He is goin' to take it away from 'em an' give it to the 'Mericans, so 'at dey kin git rich quick an' buil' fine houses an' be mo' up-to-da'. An' Billy's gran'mama tole him to shet his mouf, 'at she know he lie—'at she know what philerpener is, fuh she is seed her white folks eat 'em lots er times. An' she say 'at ef white folks calls dem poor colored people Philerpeners, it's 'cause dey is done got so greedy 'at dey is turned canibile an' wants to eat 'em."

"Well, honey, I don't hardly know how to explain dat. I know 'at philerpeners *use to* be twin haz'enuts, an' philberts, an' almons', an' I have saw Miss Fannie an' Miss Mary eat 'em many a time. Me an' Rose use to crack de nuts an' pick out de kernels fuh 'em, an' we did so enjoy seein' 'em ketch each other's philerpener. But, now, maybe de preacher wuz talkin' 'bout de Philippians. I know Billy must er misonderstan' him, an' dey must er been dem same people 'at's comin' wif de show. You know, Paul writ a great many letters to de Philippians, tellin' 'em to be filled wif de fruits er righteousness an' glory of Gawd, an' he tole 'em to beware of dogs and evil workers. But, sholy, dem Philippians isn't done turned back to heathendom, an' goin' 'roun' half naked in dis broad noonday sun, so 'at Gawd done got tired er foolin' wif 'em. An' I reckon'

dey'll try to bring dey out-landish fashions to dis country. Ef dey do, dey'll be sho to find somebody big enough fool to follow 'em. Well, I'll try to be up to de parade to see dem people, jes to see how low dey done fall."

"It won't do fuh nobody to miss dat show," said Malinda, "from what people say."

"Well, I mus' go on an' git my groceries. De rain is over, an' even de clouds done disappear. Good day to all! Come to see me when you kin, Sis' Mowin an' Ethey."

## CHAPTER VIII

The circus had been a big success. At five o'clock in the morning the wagons, carriages and horseback riders were pouring into town. The circus had arrived at 4.30 A. M., and all the small boys and circus-loving people had been awakened by the loud and labored puffing of two immense steam-engines, bringing the great combine up from the "Y." Many, unable to await the grand street parade at 10.30 sharp, had hurriedly dressed and gone to witness the very interesting process of unloading the animals. Of all towns, none can excel the county seat of the "Banner County of the best State in the Union" in appreciation of the circus. It may meet with bad luck and poor receipts at other points, but the "Mascot" always fills its coffers with gold and sends it on its way rejoicing. This day had been no exception to the rule. Miss Gertrude and Mrs. Gilmore had returned from the afternoon performance delighted, as were most who attended. Miss Gertrude had retired immediately to her room for a moment's relaxation, but Mrs. Gilmore, who had fallen into the first easy chair found in the yard, was watching the return to their homes of the tired mothers and crying children, and the young girls with their chewing gum and their first beaux.

"Good evenin', ma'm!" said a voice behind her. Looking around, she saw Aunt Vesta, dressed in

black. She carried in her hand a black befrage veil, in which was wrapped a large orange.

"Please, ma'm," she asked, as Mrs. Gilmore greeted her, "may I git a drink at de hydran'?"

"I has been to de circus," said she hesitatingly, as she returned to thank her for the water, "an' dat red lemonade, while it do tas' fine, ne'er do squinch my thirs'. Thank you, ma'm," as she took the chair under the shade in response to Mrs. Gilmore's invitation to rest a moment.

"Yas'm, I went to de show, an' I cert'n'y did enjoy myse'f fine, even ef some er my color did look at me lack I done commit a great crime."

"What crime is there in going to a circus?" asked Mrs. Gilmore.

"None, as I kin see. When I fuss went out to de groun's, I went up to de lemonade stan' to git me a glass er lemonade, an' some women standin' dare mos' stare dey eyes out at my black dress an' veil, an' when I turn an' went to walk away, I heyard one er 'em say: 'Hi, I didn't know it wuz etiquette to go out in susiety when yo' husban' aint been daid but a munt.' I knowd 'at dey wuz talkin' 'bout me, but I ne'er let on. I know 'at folks say 'at it aint etiquette to go in susiety 'fore you husban' been daid a yeah, fuh dat matter, but I couldn't stay at home a yeah, grievin' myse'f to deaf tryin' to keep up wif etiquette.

"An', Miss, do you know 'at people is crueller to widders en dey is to any yuther nation er people on de good Lawd's earth? Now, wif widderwers it's diff'ent. Ev'rybody look lack dey tries dey-

se'ves takin' on o'er *them*—envitin' 'em to dinners an' suppers to keep 'em from gittin' lonesome. But, somehow, dey always looks at a widder lack dey think 'at she ought er go dig a hole to-side her husban's grave, an' git in it an' stay dare tell she die. I don't know why it's so—but I know 'at it is.

"Now, I've been stayin' at home, cryin' my eyes out grievin' fuh my husban', an' I wuz feelin' worser en miserbler all de time, an' but fuh little Ethey's visits to me most ev'ry day I'd er been daid befo' now. An' when I heyard dat circus comin' a-whistlin' into town dis mornin', I made up my min' to run away from my grief. So I got up, an' dress myse'f, an' brile me some breakfast bacon, an' toas' me a little bread, an' make me a hot cup er coffee, an' I went up an' stood on de hill, clost to where dey wuz onloadin' dat show, an' I watched 'em take off dem beauterful horses an' all dem carloads er animals. Den I went up town an' waited fuh de parade, an' den I followed de parade out to de show-groun's, an' I's jes now gittin' home. I tuck in de whole thin', side-shows an' all, an' I cert'ny did enjoy it. Dem beauterful ladies on horseback, an' in dem charrets! An' dem beauterful turpeeze reformers! An' dem beauterful statutory angels! Miss, did you see dem beauterful statutory angels? An' wuzn't dey beauterful? I jes know dey never will look no mo' lack angels when dey is flyin' 'roun' up in heaven en dey did under dat circus tent."

Aunt Vesta was so enthusiastic that Mrs. Gil-

more never ventured the sound of her voice in reply to her questions, but only nodded assent.

"I took off my veil in de big tent," said she, showing it to Mrs. Gilmore. "De colored people stare it out er countenance. 'Side, it wuz hot under dare, so I jes tuck it off an' wrap up my orange in it. I don't believe 'at I is commit any crime goin' to a circus jes 'cause my husban' happen to be daid," said she with a sigh, turning to Mrs. Gilmore for assent.

"Certainly not, Aunt Vesta, and if you enjoyed it I am glad you went."

"Jes as long as my husban' live," she resumed, "I work fuh him, an' wait on him; now 'at he is daid an' in his grave, what mo' kin I do? Etiquette may do fuh white folks, what hasn't had nuffin but pleasure an' enjoyment all dey lifetimes. Dey kin efford to stay at home an' werry 'bout etiquette ten years ef dey want to, when dey husban' die; but a po' colored person what havn't had nuffin but hard work sense slavery can't efford to grieve a whole yeah, 'cause dey would be daid 'fore de yeah wuz out. I jes has to try to git a little enjoyment out er life.

"You know, in slave times I wuz a nurse part er de time, an' a maid part er de time, an' I use to git tooken on trips wif my white folks down South. I use to travel wif 'em up an' down de Mississippi River on dem beauterful boats. I's been to New Orleans an' to Baton Rouge, an' out to a lots er beauterful plantations. But I ne'er kin fuhgit if I live to be a hundred years old dem fine times I have travelin' on dem beauterful

Mississippi River steamboats. Dem beauteiful dressed ladies, wif dey sweet little chillun an' maids! An' de bes' thin's to eat! An' de beauteifulles music! Dem beauteiful dressed ladies singin' an' playin, 'I'm dreamin' er Hallie!' Dat's de fuss time I e'er did heah dat song, an' it sho did put me in a trance. Oh, but dat's de fines' way to travel whatever is been envented! Dem lovely boats, movin' 'long wifout a ruffle. Why, Miss, do you know, I thought dey wuz paradise floatin' on de water.

"An' when I live in Glasgow, sense freedom, I use to git tooken on trips to St. Louis wif Miss Elenor, as nurse. Oh, but she wuz a fine lady! An' I cert'n'y did enjoy myse'f," brightening up and smiling, "stoppin' at dem fine hotels, an' walkin' in dem gran' halls, an' goin' up an' down in dem elervaters. Now, dat wuz somethin' 'at I did enjoy—it make me feel so lack I wuz flyin'. Folks say 'at elevaters isn't safe; but I know 'at I'll take de rist ev'ry time to git to ride in 'em. I know 'at I won't be no happier when I has got sho 'nough wings an' is flyin' 'roun' up in heaven en I use to be ridin' up an' down in dem elervaters in dem big St. Louis hotels!"

"Well, I am glad you attended the circus, Aunt Vesta, if you enjoyed it. You had better go around to the kitchen and stay for supper with Malinda and Ethey. We are going to have ice-cream for supper, and you will find it refreshing this hot evening."

"Oh, thank you, ma'm! Thank you ma'm! I's very fond er ice-cream, but I doesn't often git



it. An' 'sides, I would be mighty lonesome eatin' at home by myse'f, after all my enjoyment today. I's felt sich a cloud settlin' over me ever sense I lef' de circus tent. It seems 'at I wuz jes goin' right back to my troubles, fresher en ever. But, Miss, did you see dem Philippian soljurs? I look good fuh 'em 'mong de soljurs, but ef dey wuz dare, dey have on as many cloze as any er de yuthers."

Just then Malinda and Ethey came in at the side gate. Ethey walked very languidly across the yard and seated herself on the back porch step. She had a moment only to tell Mrs. Gilmore, in answer to her question as to what she thought of the circus, that it "wuz jes gran'l"

## CHAPTER IX

"Wake up, boy! Wake up!" said Ethey, hastily entering the kitchen where Aunt Vesta, Malinda and Pete were peeling peaches. "Things goin' to git a move on 'em!"

"Things already got a move on 'em", grumbled Pete. "Ef cannin' peaches don't make things move, nothin' else need n't try."

"Well, things goin' to move mo' livelier an' mo' diffe'nter. Comp'ny is comin'! A lady an' a little girl is comin' on a visit, an' de lady writ in de letter 'at de little girl aint ne'er sawd no colored people in her whole lifetime."

"Aint ne'er sawd no colored people!" exclaimed Aunt Vesta in surprise. "Where in de name of goodness is she been livin'? In some heathen land, co'se."

"Dey live in de Ozarks, Miss say, where'er dat is", replied Ethey.

"It soun's lack some mountain country," said Pete:

"Well," added Malinda, laughing, "I hope she won't git too skeer'd of us. She'll have to git use to us by degrees. Spossen she won't make up wif you, gal? Dat will break yo' heart, I'm sho."

"An' Pete better make hisse'f skeerce at fuss, hadn't he, mama? 'Cause he is blacker 'en we is."

"Don't you min' 'bout me, gal! You do git

imp'denter an' imp'denter ev'ry day. Yo' mam-my aughter skin you. I knows one thing—you won't hafter make yo'se'f too plenterful in dat house, 'cause she won't need you. An' you need n't be peckin' on dat pianer in dat parlor, 'cause dat little white chile aint goin' to think colored kids is sich a rarity."

"Shet up, Tarball! You got to shine up dat phaeton. Miss goin' to meet dem people tomorrow when dey get off dat railroad. You don't ne'er know nothin' tell I enforms you."

"I know one thing—I's goin' to hit you, ef you don't stop givin' me so much of yo' lip. An' I aint 'fraid of no law handlin' me fuh it, neither!"

"Now, Ethey, honey," said Aunt Vesta, "I know dat chile can't be from no civ'lized country or she'd know somethin' 'bout colored people".

"I know 'nough myse'f, Sis' Hunter, to know 'at she can't be up-to-da' ef she aint ne'er sawd no colored people. But, co'se, I'm goin' to be perlite to her, 'cause she is Miss's comp'ny. An' when Miss wants me to, I'll put on my little red checkedy gingham dress an' promernade 'roun' in dis yard wif her; 'cause dey isn't no tellin' what kinder wile varments may poke day huids out from 'hind dese trees an' bushes in dis yard to skeer her—pokin' fun at her, you know, 'cause dat little white chile what aint ne'er sawd no colored people is goin' to be as big a rarity to varments as to people."

"An' don't you squirt none of Sis' Hunter's way-down-South French at her. I know dat would finish her," snapped Pete.

"Well, honey," said Aunt Vesta, gesticulating with a half-peeled peach, "I'm sho you 'll find dat little white chile quare; 'cause, somehow, white people what don't know nothin' 'bout colored people always is quare an' critical an' curious. I don't know why, onless Gawd entended at dey should be; but I know it's so. Well, it stan' to reason ef people aint ne'er saw no colored people dey ain't saw much. 'Cause, now, take way back in Fuhginia, you go to travellin' 'roun' de country, an' where'er you see de mos' colored people an' de longes' line of cabins, you see de mos' of ev'rythin' an' ev'rythin' de mos' plenterful an' flourishin'—pianer an' melojum in de parlor, an' fiddlin' an' shufflin' an' pattin' an' dancin' in de back yard an' 'roun' de quarters. Oh, dat patten' juber back in Fuhginia! Ef dem colored people couldn't make de welkin ring! Why, honey, hottes' days in sunner men an' boys right out of de corn fiel', where dey jes done let go de hoe handle, befo' dey had et a bite of dinner, would be patten' juber an' dancin'."

"It go lack dis, don't it, Sis' Hunter, said Pete, getting up and beginning the song so familiar to the old-time Southerner, "Juber! juber dis an' juber dat, juber 'roun' de yaller cat, juber!"

"Yas, some," Aunt Vesta nodded, "but, honey," turning to Ethey, "maybe de words don't soun' ve'y entellergent, but back in Fuhginia dey did make music an' make yo' heart feel light an' gay. Why, honey, back in Fuhginia, jes seein' de sunshine an' de dew glistenin' on de grass would make me toss my haid an' swing on de corners

an' adamant lef'. Oh, but we could cut de pigeon wing on ve'y slight provocation in dem days. Ev'rythin' wuz so pretty in spring an' summer-times. I did love out-of-doors. Why, dey'd jes hafter come out an' drive me in de house. When dey'd want me to do chores, I'd always find de birds so entertainin'; de mimy birds an' de Johny birds 'specially dey'd talk so cheerful an' kin' to each other. I'd listen to 'em so keerful, I couldn't heah nobody callin' me in de house.

"But when we'd git out by de callercanter bushes an' git to smellin' de callercanters, we'd sho be in heaven! Why, we'd mos' snif our little haids off smellin' dem callercanters. We'd fill our bosoms an' sleeves wif dem blossoms, an' Tulip would have to come out dare an' whip us 'way from dem callercanter bushes. Miss Fannie thought de sun riz an' set in Tulip, 'cause she raised her from a little baby. Her mother died when she wuz born, an' ole Marster give her to Miss Fannie, an' Miss Fannie raised her on a bottle in a wooden cradle. We wuz so jealous of Tulip, 'cause Miss Fannie thought so much of her. Now, that, honey, wuz ve'y sinful in us—to be jealous of Tulip, when she ne'er did have no mother lack de res' of us. No mammy," shaking her head, "to tuck her in de bed at night, an' tell her 'at nothin' wouldn't hurt her, 'cause she, her own se'f done hoo-doo de ghostes an' driv' 'em all away. Why, honey, we aughter been glad 'at Tulip have somebody in de worl' 'at come so near to bein' a mother to her. Miss Fannie wuz a natchul keertaker; she loved eve'y-

thin' 'at wuz little an' dependent. Po' Miss Fannie have to spend all her money an lose her slaves tryin' to keep her own little chillun 'at she had brung into de worl' by her own sufferin' an' sorrow. How she did have to sup sorrow! That is de saddes' recollection of all my lifetime in Fuhginia, 'ceptin' my ole Marster's death.

"Well, Mrs. Mowen, I better go on home an' take my sorrows an' triberlations, an' learn to keep 'em to myse'f."

"Not at all, Sis' Hunter. Stay an' talk. You been a great help, both in peelin' peaches an' passin' de time away. I'm a thousand times obliged to you fuh both."

"Han' me my bonnet, Ethey. Dey isn't nothin' in dis worl' so werry some to folks as yuther people's troubles. I'll try to stop by tomorrer to glimpse dat little white chile an' see what effec' de new sights have on her. Good-by to all. Come down when you kin spare de time. Well, there goes Marandy wif her feathers a-flyin' ", as she stood in the doorway.

"Now you don't say so, Sis' Hunter! Mr. Johnson say 'at she is squah-toed on de carpet agin. He say she lef' her fuss husban' 'cause he never pursue her after dey wuz married lack he done befo' ".

"Ne'er pursue her after dey wuz married lack he done befo'! Why, co'se not!" exclaimed Aunt Vesta. "What in de name of goodness is de sense of pursuin' de bird after you done cot it? An' how come she lef' her second?"

"She say she lef' him 'cause he make hisse'f too much at home. She say he'd come in her house an' hang up his hat jes lack he wuz at home."

"My gracious me! Mirandy is one of dem women what jes searches fuh 'scuses fuh davorce. But now, after all, it don't seem so onnatchul for her to want him—well—not to say keep up de pursuit exac'ly, but not ac' so lack he done cot her an' own her. None of us lack to feel 'at we's cot."

"Oh, Sis' Hunter, you'll be the death of me yit! Come agin soon—don't make yo' visits lack hen's teeth. You make us all glad we's livin', in spite of yo' triburlations," said Malinda, as she bowed good-by to Aunt Vesta.

The little girl from the Ozarks was at first a little shy of Ethey but by degrees she made friends. One morning Ethey took her into the yard to get "good and 'quainted" with her, but Kitty Sue soon grew tired and expressed a desire to go outside.

"How come, chile, you don't want to see Mrs. Pecker-wood's house? Why, honey, she bit all de insides out of dat tree to make room for her an' her little chilluns. She don't low de ole gent'-man on de inside much—she make him stay outside an' sing. Mama say dat's all de ole male sect is fitten fuh."

"Oh," replied Kitty Sue, "I see plenty of bird's houses in the Ozarks. Let us see the people's houses," going toward the street, drawing Ethey with her.

"Well, co'se, honey, dey is entertainment 'long de street. Dey's mos' as many diff'ent kin's of houses as people."

They walked hand in hand, Ethey talking about the houses and their occupants. Presently they had turned into a side street and were soon in front of Aunt Vesta's home.

"Heah," said Ethey, peeping through the palin' fence, "is where our walkin' an' talkin' story-book lives. Pete say you don't have to worry yo' min' 'bout de readin' an' spellin' in it—jes set still an' listen an' you'll git it done up brown." Just then a voice from the porch called out:

"Come in, chillun! You lookin' fuh me?"

"Dis chile seem lonesome to see somethin' diff'ent from up to our house. Why, she jes pulled me out of our yard, an' 'fore I knowed what wuz happenin' we wuz down to heah," Ethey apologized, as they seated themselves on a big chair in front of Aunt Vesta.

"How dis do remin' me of back in Fuhginia, when little white chillun run off to de cabin to eat sweet cakes an' hear my ole gran'mammy talk! Only I has no sweet cakes to pass. I lack to keep up dem ole styles when I has de wherwif. It seems so airistocratic. An' I tell you now, chile, if dey is one thing on de good Lord's earf goin' to make heaven bar de do' 'ginst me, it's dat one word 'airistocratic.' That's one word dat down-South French ne'er did mix up my lang'age on. But, chillun, I can't half talk 'thout passin' somethin'. Ethey, honey, take dis box top an' go gether some grapes. Pick some de pretties'



leaves an' cover de box top befo' you gether de grapes—makes a kin'er fruit basket, you know, an' makes de grapes look mo' enticin' mongst de green leaves.

"Dat's it, honey!" as Ethey returned, holding aloft the tempting fruit. "We kin talk better now that things 'pears mo' socherble. Jes take de bigges' bunch," as Ethey passed the fruit to Kitty Sue; "dat's all right—it's de closest' to you. It's perlite to take de bigges' when it's de closest', 'cause, den, you aint pickin' fuh it. I know dis chile muster been lonesome in dat big yard wif nobody but you an' de bugs an' birds to entertain her. Reckin' Benjermin Tilman don't try to be no comp'ny fuh her, he's so fond of men folks. You has showd off Susan B., though—made her say, 'corn, corn, corn,' crow fuh meat, wipe her mouf on de grass an' tend 'at it wuz her napkin?"

"Don't talk 'bout Susan B., Sis' Hunter. Didn't dat outdacious little ole white rooster jump up an' spur dis little white chile!—toard her little brown stockin' 'at match her new dress so good. An' her our comp'ny! De worse part of it, she feel so bricketty 'bout it when de little chile cry 'at she step to one side an' crow lack she done done somethin' smart. Good-fuh-nothin' thing! Why, we has to carry long sticks an' bresh when we promernades 'roun' de yard, to fight her off wif. No'm, Susan B. don't give us no enjoyment."

"Well, dat's too bad! Honey," turning to Kitty Sue, "have some mo' grapes—deys plenty on de vines. You sho you don't want no mo'?"

as Kitty Sue, thanking her, shook her head. "Fuhginia people al'ays wants you to eat a plenty. An' dey keeps askin'—don't make no diff'ence how many helps you had—dey keeps askin' tell comp'ny rayfuses. Yas, dat's Fuhginia ettiquette.

"Let me see, honey, what else kin we do fuh yo' entertainment? Oh, yas, Ethey, run in de house an' git de starryscope an' de pictures. Dey wuz cornsidered gran' entertainment in ole times back in Fuhginia. Co'se, in dis day an' generation dey isn't much. In dese days of walkin' and talkin' pictures, settin' still pictures is very tame, ended. No, honey, dey isn't much fuh dese swif'-movin' times. Dey may make you feel mo' uplifted in speret when you's lonesome. Dey isn't nothin' lack bein' lonesome to make you wilt down.

"Now, what mus' I show you fuss? Oh, yas, heah is a little boy settin' in a pretty garden. Aint dat pretty? Flowers an' sunshine! You can't blame dat little boy fuh settin' dare lack he aint got no notion of stirrin' hisse'f off dat bench. How de sunshine makes dem dew-drops glisten an' shine! An' see how de butterflies skim de air 'roun' dem flowers! Sunshine an' flowers aughter make anybody happy an' corntented. Why, even at my time of life dey makes me feel joyful, 'cause it seem lack a promise from Gawd 'at He aint got no notion of withdrawin' de light of His countenance from po' humants. An' do you know where all de flowers got dey pretty colors? De preacher tole us Decoration Day 'at a beauterful

woman walked 'mongst de flower beds when Gawd fuss made dat lovely garden, an' give all de colors an' tints an' var'ableness to de flowers.

"Now, heah is some little girls dancin' 'roun' de May-pole! I know by de glisten of yo' eye 'at you lacks little girls better en little boys. Yas, 'cause, somehow, boys' ways is so outdacious 'at little girls ne'er lacks 'em. Dey waits tell de boys gits growd up an' got good manners an' dameanyers fitten to socherate wif ladies befo' dey has much use fuh 'em," smiling and glancing over her glasses at Kitty Sue.

"Heah, honey, is a weddin'! Dis is de bride. You'll lack her, 'cause seein' a bride is somethin' worth seein'. I al'ays did crave to see brides. Why, I have saw de time I'd crawl on my han's and knees to see a bride. Brides didn't use to do lack dey do now. Dey use to make deyse'ves mo' skeerce. Dey didn't use to parade deyse'ves two or three weeks befo'han' an' den aft'ards keep deyse'ves al'ays in sight of people. No, honey, dey keep deyse'ves close fuh weeks befo'han'. Den, lack dey marry Thursday, you wouldn't git no outside glimpse of 'em tell Sunday. Den, how people creen dey necks to see 'em! An' dat's natchul, honey, to lack people better ef dey isn't al'ays befo' our eyes. I have saw young men seem turble struck on young girls tell dey'd see too much of 'em. Why, dem gals would hang 'roun' 'em tell dey'd achtyully turn an' look de yuther way. No, honey, no gent'man aint goin' to lack a lady long when she

ac' lack she want to butt out his eyesight. But, den, honey, dey is plenty of time fuh you to think on sich subjec's.

"Heah is a picture of Lincoln freein' de slaves. See how de chains an' shackles fall off as dey kneel befo' him! He have a kin'-hearted smile, honey, an' he wuz kin'. But fuh him all people of my color an' Ethey's would still be in servitude. An' heah is General Grant, one of his soljiers in war times. He is ve'y sabbage lookin', but he mus' er thought a heep of colored people from how he fit to free 'em.

"An' heah, honey, is a picture of Una an' de lion," showing a picture of Una, of Spenser's "Faerie Queene," nude, mounted on a lion, over which was spread a mantle. "Don't be 'shamed to look at it, honey, 'cause it's a religious picture. De gent'man what give it to me tole me not to be 'shamed to look at it, 'cause it wuz a religious picture an' not weaked. It's true her close is ve'y skeerce, an' what few she's got she's done spread on de lion, an' she aint ridin' sideways, neither, but yet an' still it's a religious picture an' not sinful, lack it looks. Dat picture muster been taken from times of great ign'ance an' few close."

"We sawd a white lady ridin' dat way, Sis' Hunter, as we come down heah."

"Dat may be, honey, in yo' day, but you would n't of saw it in my day. No, ended, honey! Young ladies in my day wuz much better taken keer of en now."

"I'll bet dey wuz, Sis' Hunter. Yo' white

ladies wuz de queens of de lan', wuz n't dey, Sis' Hunter?"

"Well, I'll tell you, chile, what a white gent'-man say to me once-t. He say, 'Yo' Miss Mary an' Fannie look lack dey feet ought not to tech de groun'. He said dem ve'y words, ef I have to die fuh it nex' minnit. An' he say dey wuz perfec'! An' dey wuz as near perfec' as dey could be, to be so rich. De only grudge I e'er have 'ginst Miss Fannie wuz sendin' me to de ice-house in de night-times. She would want a cool drink of water, you know. Oh, but I'd be skeerd! I'd be so 'fraid I'd see a ghos' I'd shet my eyes right tight."

"Ghoses wuz ve'y plenterful back in Fuhginia, wuzn't dey, Sis' Hunter?"

"Endeed dey wuz—lots mo' plenterful en heah. Some people could n't hardly step dey foot out of do's 'thout buttin' up 'ginst a ghos'. But, honey, we could mighty soon fuhget our sorrows; 'cause joys an' pleasures come so quick back in Fuhginia. We little colored chillun wuz ne'er happier en when dey be a whole house full of comp'ny. When we'd have a little lull of comp'ny, me an' Rose would be perched upon de gate-postes strainin' our eyes to de big road, hopin' an' prayin' fuh comp'ny to come. An' it wouldn't be long tell we'd see a carr'age turnin' in at our big gate out on de big road. Oh, but our little hearts would leap fuh joy! We'd skin down off dem gate-postes an' go flyin' to de house, hollerin' loud as we could, 'Comp'ny's comin! Comp'ny's comin! Come, call off de dogs!

Come, call off de dogs!' An' heah would come a man from de woodpile wif a axe, an' maybe Aunt Tildy from de ironin' room wif a flat-iron. Furginia people wuz great on dogs, an' our dogs wuz ve'y dang'ous. Dey names wuz Watch an' Beaver, an' nobody would light down from dey carr'age tell some of de grown-ups would come out.

" 'Bout dat time de ladies would be up to our front gate. When de dogs done been driv off, de ladies would light down from dey carr'age, an' of all de rus'lin' of silks an' de wavin of fans! An' perfumery! Why, it seem to us a big gap done open up in de sky an' a whole barrel of perfumery done been poured down! Me an' Rose would stan' dare an' draw long breafs, tryin' to draw in all dat perfumery. We'd git jes as close to dem rus'lin' silks as we could. An' Miss Fannie would n't let on 'at she saw us, 'cause she knowed it made us little chillun so happy to see comp'ny an' smell perfumery. Dey'd maybe be de Miss Braxtons, some ladies of high civility 'at lived close to us. When dey'd go to walk in de house, dey dresses would be so long dey'd even drag in front. Dey could n't take a step 'thout holdin' 'em up. But dey wouldn't hol' 'em up all de time! No, ended! Dey'd take 'em up—so," getting up and imitating the ladies, "an' take a step, den dey'd drap 'em down. Den dey'd take 'em up agin, take a step, an' drap 'em down. Dat's how dey'd do. Furginia ladies didn't gramp dey han's an' hol' on to nothin' long at a time, 'cause dey thought it would be too hard on

dey han's. Me an' Rose would step up behin' an' take up dey dresses, 'at wuz draggin' on de groun', an' walk behin' dem all de way to de house, holdin' up dey dresses. An' proud! Oh, Lawdee, how proud we'd be! In dem times, honey, jes tetchin' de hem of rich people's garments would make us feel proud. I pray ev'ry day de good Lord up in heaven will fuhgive my weakness. But, honey, 'tain't only my color Gawd will have to fuhgiv. I have saw white people trail after rich people an' look lack dey thought it de greates' honor in de worl' to be permitted to walk in dey shadder. It's a fine thin' some people is willin' to walk behin'. Gawd muster entended it. We can't all walk in front. Dey'd be knockin' down an' draggin' out all de time, ef we wuz to try it."

"Thin's would be all right in dat house, too, wouldn't dey, Sis' Hunter?"

"Thin's all right in dat house? Well, I jes reckon dey would! 'Cause Furginians wouldn't have nothin' at wuzn't all right. Fuhginians is ve'y choice people."

"Dat house would be deckerated scan'lous, wouldn't it, Sis' Hunter?"

"It would, ended! Dem ladies would be tooken into de drawin'-room. De drawin'-room wuz de place where dey take all dey partic'lar comp'ny."

"An', co'se, dey pass 'roun' somethin' to dey comp'ny?—ash cake an' possum?" winking slyly at Kitty Sue.

"Ash cake an' possum to pertic'lar comp'ny! Why, chile, has you los' yo' min'? What would

fine ladies, dressed up in silk an' perfumery, look lack settin' up in de drawin'-room eatin' ash cake an' possum? Dey et ash cake an' possum, co'se—no lady of good tas'e could he'p eatin' ash cake an' possum—but not in de drawin'-room, nur befo' comp'ny. What did we pass our comp'ny? Why, wine an' fruit cake. Yas, honey, wine, in long, slim-waisted, taperin' wine-glasses. An' dey'd sip it ve'y easy an' silent, 'thout makin' no dasturbance, an' talk all de time!

"Miss Fannie would entertain her beaux in de drawin'-room, too. An' heah let me tell you, honey," turning to Kitty Sue, "not all by herse'f. No, indeed! No high-up young white lady in Furginia ever did set up in de parlor an' talk to gent'men all by herse'f. When de beaux called, a little colored girl wuz sent in where'er dey wuz, wif her knittin', to set on a stool in de corner. An' she stay dare, too, tell de gent'man take his hat an' make his bow an' leave.

"I never will fuhgit one time when a rich ole jedge from Richmon' wuz callin' on Miss Fannie—payin' his a'dresses, as ladies of high civility say. I wuz settin' on de stool knittin', an' I kep' lookin' at him. I didn't lack him, 'cause I thought he wanted Miss Fannie. I ne'er took my eyes off him, an' I listen to ev'ry word he say to Miss Fannie. He didn't lack it, so he say to Miss Fannie:

"'You has a ve'y smart little girl, she kin knit 'thout lookin' at it.'

"'Miss Fannie say to me: 'Min' yo' knittin', Vesta—min' yo' knittin'!'



"He didn't sidetrack me. I knowed it wuz partic'lar talk he wuz talkin' to Miss Fannie. I could tell by de quaverin's in his voice."

"Dem wuz onlies' times, wuz n't dey, Sis' Hunter?"

"Yas, honey, dem wuz good times in many ways—not 'at I aint thankful fuh my freedom. Ev'rybody ought to have dey liberty an' priverlidge. But thin's wuz ve'y plenterful in dem days. I do know we did have de grandes' clock in my ole Marster's house. It stood on de flo' an' mos' reach up to de ceilin'. Miss Fannie could tell when it wuz goin' to be moonlight by lookin' at de clock, 'thout waitin' fuh night-times to come. Oh, my, how thin's is changed! Thin's would be de same now, an' I'd be back in Fuhginia, ef my Miss Fannie hadn't married dat ole Dr. Karner. She didn't marry him tell Marse Charles died. It mos' broke Marse Charles' heart to think of his sister marryin' dat ole man. Marse Charles wuz Miss Fannie's own brother, an' Marse Park wuz Miss Mary's own brother.

"Marse Park died away from home, an' when dey brought him back home, dey brought him back on de top of de stage-coach. Yas, he wuz in a fine casket on de top of de stage-coach. De people where he died sent back all his thin's to Miss Mary an' Miss Fannie—yas, even to de las' apple 'at he ever did bite off of. Miss Mary an' Miss Fannie use to jes cry over dat apple. Dey would n't throw it away, an' nobody want 'lowed to tech it. Dey wuzn't no danger of us little chillun techin' it, 'cause we wuz sho it wuz

hainted. One time I peeps in Miss Mary's room, an' dare it set on de winder-sill; dey wuzn't nobody in de room an I thought I'd die befo' I could git down dem stairs. I do know, on my soul, ef a brea' of win' had jarred dat apple I'd drapt daid. De las' time I saw dat apple it wuz settin' on de winder-sill, an' it jes done turned to mush. I cert'ny wuz glad when it disappear."

"Oh, Lawdee!" exclaimed Ethey, getting near Aunt Vesta, "I know you wuz, fuh jes hearin' tell of dat apple makes me quiver an' quake."

"But, honey, little chillun is often times ve'y weakened an' sinful. Do you know, 'at while me an' Rose wuz so proud to wait on rich white people, we'd set de dogs on our own color. Yas, honey, I hope Gawd done fuhgive us, but me an' Rose wuz ve'y mean to ole Aunt Wooden-lag Aggie an' ole Uncle One-Eyed Sam. Dey wuz free niggers. Dey wuz set free on 'count of dey 'flections, an' dey 'flections muster drawd 'em together in wedlock. Anyhow, dey got married. An' dey use to travel 'roun' in de country, walkin', to visit colored people livin' at rich places. De name of our place wuz *Ole Santee*. Well, sometimes me an' Rose would be perched up on de gate-postes, lookin' fuh comp'ny, an' we'd see ole Aunt Wooden-lag Aggie an' ole Uncle One-Eyed Sam turn in at our big gate off on de big road. We'd slip down easy off de gate-postes, but we didn't run to tell nobody to come call off de dogs. No, ended! We'd hide behin' de callercanter bushes tell dey'd git mos' to de house, den, when de dogs done break out after 'em, we'd come

from behin' de bushes an' say, easy: 'Sickum, Watch! Sickum, Beaver!' Den we'd holler loud: 'Come heah, Watch! Come heah, Beaver!' After we done werry dem po' people awhile, we'd go down to meet 'em, an' walk good an' kin' wif 'em up to de cabin. We aughter been blistered fuh bein' so deceatful. Aunt Wooden-lag Aggie would have her redicule on her arm, an' she'd have it plum full of sweet cakes. She'd give me an' Rose some, but we wouldn't eat 'em. No, ended! We'd take 'em an' thank her; but we'd throw 'em 'way as soon as her back wuz turned. We'd imagine dey wouldn't be good on 'count of dat wooden lag an' one eye. We could efford to be finnicky den, honey, 'bout our eatin'. We didn't know, in dem days, what it wuz to be hungry an' not know where de nex' meal wuz comin' from.

"Lawdee, ef any of dis talk wuz to git back to Miss Mary an' Miss Fannie, dey'd know it wuz me. I hope I aint committin' no sin' talkin' 'bout times back in Furginia. It's true thin's aint flourishin' wif me lack dey once-t wuz, but I thank Gawd fuh good recollection, 'cause good recollection keeps me from fuhgittin' 'at I wuz once-t flourishin' an' gay. Las' night I dreampt 'bout de ole place. I dreampt I wuz goin' down de cellar to git apples fuh Miss Fannie an' her comp'ny. Ev'rythin' wuz so natchul lookin'. I slid my han' 'long de jam as I went down, an' I have de same keer-free, light feelin' in my heart I use to have when I wuz young. It may seem foolish, little chillun, fuh a ole woman lack me,

but when I woke up an' foun' it wuz all a dream, I couldn't he'p from cryin'. Honey, I kin shet my eyes now an' see Aunt Tildy parchin de coffee. She'd parch it out in de yard, in a big oven on a tribble. De tribble have three legs. An' she better not have one grain of dat coffee blacker en de yuthers. All our people know how to do thin's jes so. I do know, on my soul, my Aunt Mary could make de bes' bread! An' ash cake—oh, my!—baked in collar leaves fuh de white ladies!

"We did love our white ladies. We loved to be 'roun' 'em. Me an' Rose use to pick de fines' apples we could find under our apple trees an' take to 'em. Dey would divide wif us, an' smile an' thank us. An' jes dat smile would make us feel so happy. I don't b'lieve grown people smile on young people lack dey use to. I'm sho dey would, ef dey had good recollection, an' could recollect' how smiles use to lighten dey own little burdens."

"Wait a minnit, Sis' Hunter, listen! Who is dat callin' me? Dat long-mouf Pete! Come on, chile," taking Kitty Sue by the hand. "You an' me ought not staid so long, an' Sis' Hunter ought not been so entertainin', 'cause we's chillun, an' got no jedgment 'bout goin' home. You an' me will suffer fuh all dis when we gits home."

"Wait a minnit, honey, tell I git my bonnet. I'll go home wif you to see ef I can't lighten yo' little burden. I kin testerfy 'at we wuz gittin' consolation from each other; 'cause we wuz all lonesome an' sorrowful.

The evening after the visit to Aunt Vesta, Kitty Sue and Ethey were in the swing. It was getting dark. Kitty Sue was a little nervous, intimating that spirits and haints might be behind the big pine trees. Ethey reassured her, saying:

"Dey isn't one speck of danger, chile, from haints, when yo' mama an' Miss is on de porch, an' my mama an' Mr. Johnson in de back yard talkin' church an' festurble.

"But I do wish," she continued, "'at I did have some way of turnin' on de moon an' stars to shut out de darkness fuh you. Dey isn't nothin' I wouldn't do fuh partic'lar comp'ny. Ef I could tech a button an' light up de sky, we'd have moonlight ev'ry night. Sis' Hunter say 'at Gawd know when to sen' moonlight. She say ef we had moonlight all de time, dey wouldn't be a chicken lef' in dis worl'; 'cause a chicken shadder cast on de moonlight is somethin' no chicken thief kin stan'.

"Hoopee, chile, look at de lightnin'-bugs," pointing to the fireflies in the air around them. "Ole Mr. an' Mrs. Lightnin'-bug an' all dey little chillun lightnin'-bugs is done come to light up dis yard fuh us, so 'at we won't git lonesome an' be skeered of haints. You know, lightnin'-bugs isn't skeerd of nothin', 'cause dey carries dey lights 'roun' wif 'em all de time. Yas, chile, you know dey has dey lanterns hitched on to 'em, so 'at dey kin have 'em handy. Ef dey wants to go to church, er prayer-meetin', dey kin go right on, en not have to say 'at dey eyes is bad, an' 'at dey is so crippled up 'at dey can't git out in de night-

times. An' ef dey gits cot out some dark night, dey kin fin' dey way home wifout no trouble. An' ole Mr. an' Mrs. Grasshopper thinks 'at dey makes de fines' lights in dis worl—er dey uster tell dey house got burnt up."

"Did Mrs. Grasshopper's house get burnt up?" asked Kitty Sue, in surprise. "What kind of a house did she live in? A grass house?"

"Why, a fine house, co'se, chile! Mrs. Grasshopper wuz ve'y uppish, I'm come to tell you. Uh-uh! but take keer fuh ole Mrs. Grasshopper an' her uppishness befo' her fine house got burnt up! My gran'mama, she knowd all 'bout it. Injuns tole her all 'bout it, 'cause dey live out close to where ole Mr. an' Mrs. Grasshopper live, an' dem Injuns mos' bus' deyse'ves wide open laughin' at ole Mr. an' Mrs. Grasshopper's foolishness. Yas, chile, let me tell you how come it. You see, ole Mr. an' Mrs. Grasshopper wuz settin' in dey yard one hot night, an' all de sky wuz jes plum full of lightnin'-bugs. Ole Mrs. Grasshopper wuz fussin' turble at her husban' 'cause she don't own de earf. She say to him 'at she wuz tired of settin' in de dark, when ev'rybody but 'ceptin' her have 'lectric lights in dey house an' on dey front porch. Well, ole Mr. Grasshopper look up in de sky, an' when he see dat big crowd of lightnin'-bugs promernadin' 'roun' up in de fraish air, he say to her:

"'Why isn't you got yo' house lineded inside an' out wif lightnin'-bugs? Dey would beat 'lectric lights, an' even diments an' em'alds an' pearls. An' you'd be all de rage, you'd be so much diffe'n-ter en yuther people.'

"Now, you know 'at ole Mrs. Grasshopper is a mighty high-haided ole lady, an' it tickled her mos' to deaf to think 'at she'd be all de rage, so she don't let her husban' have no res' tell she got dem lightnin'-bugs hung up all over her house. Uh-uh!" as Kitty Sue, expectant, leaned forward in the swing, "take keer fuh ole Mrs. Grasshopper's uppishness. She'd cuss a blue streak ef she couldn't git her way 'bout ev'rythin', an' she make her husban' mos' work his haid off ketchin' dem lightnin'-bugs, an', co'se, he wuzn't doin nuffin but jokin' wif de ole lady, tryin' to git her min' tooken off dem 'lectric lights. But, no, sir, gent'mens, she ne'er is res' tell she gits her house lined inside an' out wif dem lightnin'-bugs.

"Den, what you resume she do? She don't do nuffin but 'tend lack 'at dem lightnin'-bugs aint no lightnin'-bugs 'tall. She 'tends lack 'at she have got styles from dem people up in de moon, an' she 'tends 'at dey is dimonts an' em'alds an' pearls what she have to light her house wif. Den she don't do nuffin but trot 'roun' dat house wif her haid hike up on one side, lookin' at dem lightnin'-bugs, an' callin' 'em dimonts an' em'alds an' pearls, tell dem lightnin'-bugs got so tired, an' so hot, an' so 'sulted at ole Mrs. Grasshopper's uppish ways 'at dey commensted to talk in dey own lang'age, so 'at ole Mr. an' Mrs. Grasshopper can't onderstan'. Well, sir, dey commensted to skeen to work a trick on her. An' you couldn't blame 'em; fuh dem lightnin'-bugs ne'er is have to work fuh nobody befo'. Dey ne'er is have nuffin to do but sail 'roun' up in de fraish air, showin' off dey lanterns an' 'stonishin' people. An' dey

al'ays feel jes' es fine an' gran' as ef dey have a sky-carr'age of dey own to ride in. An' dey jes' natchully wuzn't goin' to put up wif ole Mrs. Grasshopper's foolishness, 'tendin' lack dey wuz dimonts an' em'alds an' pearls. So, terreckly, one ole long-mouf lightnin'-bug say: 'Ef I wuz dat 'tellergernt young man on de lace curtain, I'd twis' my lantern 'roun' an' set fire to de ole lady's lace curtains.' Yas, honey, she even have 'em on de lace curtains. Her husban' didn't want her to put 'em on de lace curtains, 'cause he wuz so 'fraid of fire. But, no, she will have 'em dare.

"Well, when dat ole long-mouf lightnin'-bug call dat yuther one 'tellergernt, it make a plum fool of dat yuther one, an' he don't do nuffin but twis' his lantern 'roun' an' set fire to dem lace curtains. Den take keer fuh Mrs. Grasshopper's fine house! De fire burn de string what wuz tied to dem yuther lightnin'-bugs, an' dey all flewd out of de house; but it wuz de las' time dat 'tellergernt young lightnin'-bug e'er is set fire to anybody's lace curtains. Ole Mr. an' Mrs. Grasshopper an' all dey chillun hop out when dey see 'at de house wuz on fire, but dey ne'er is have no house sense. An', chile, ef you b'liebe it or not, dat's why dey has to roam 'roun' an' eat any little ole crum of cornbraid 'at dey kin fin', an' be thankful to set down under any little ole piece of grass to res' deyse'ves."

"Well, I never knew that before!"

"Co'se, chile, you ne'er did, 'cause you ne'er know tell now 'at colored people wuz black all over an' didn't rub off. Don't you worry yo' min'.



'bout lightnin'-bugs; dey's use to 'stonishin' people. Didn't Sis' Hunter tell us 'at her Miss Fannie made her an' Rose ketch lightnin'-bugs to trim her dress fuh de maskerade ball, an' it light up her beauty tell she drawd all de beaux from all dem yuther ladies? Don't worry yo' min' 'bout 'stonishments, as Sis' Hunter says, 'cause 'stonishments is jes waitin' fuh you in dis life, an' we aint goin' to onderstan' nothin' tell we gits our crowns an' goes to glory.

"See, heah, Lightnin'-bug! Git out of heah!" striking at a firefly. "Isn't you got 'nough room up in de air 'thout promernadin' 'roun' on me? You mus' think you own de earf. Don't be so uppish, er you might show off yo' onnerryness.

"Wait a minnit, honey," getting up and looking toward the gate. "Didn't dat gate click?"

Just then a boy went up to the porch, asking for Kitty Sue's mother. He was the bearer of bad news. Kitty Sue's father was very ill and they must return on the first train.

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The day was unusually hot and sultry. Ethey had made attempts to draw Mrs. Gilmore into conversation on the subject of the hot weather and the best method of keeping cool and "squinch-in'" thirst, giving in the meantime her own ideas,— "drinkin' ice-col' lemonade," the best possible, "settin' in de swing an' fannin'" not being a "circusstance." She had about given up all hope of making Mrs. Gilmore take the hint and make a pitcher of lemonade, when she said, suddenly:

"Miss, isn't I e'er tole you 'bout dat time I went up to de sky-man's house?" Not waiting for a reply, she continued: "Lawdee, but dat wuz a trip what wuz a trip! Dat wuz what I calls one of dem onlies' trips! Why, dat's de diff'entes' country I ever did set my two eyes on. Lawdee, Miss," turning her head and shutting her eyes, "dey isn't nuthin' in dis lowlan' soil, as my gran'mama calls it, 'at kin hol' a candle to up in de sky. An', do you know, ef it hadn't er been fuh my sky-carr'age I never could er tooken dat trip? Sky-carr'ages come in turble handy when you wants to circulate 'roun' up in de sky. Why, I didn't mo' en step my foot inside my sky-carr'age tell I lights down on dat sky country. Maybe I didn't feel green when I fuss strack dat new country! But I wuz too sharp to let on. I got out of my sky-carr'age an' went to walkin' 'roun', an' fuss thin' I knows I comes to de sky-man's house. He live in a great big house, an' it look lack a great big bank of white clouds, an' it's jes full of winders. You know when you look up in de sky in de night-times an' sees a whole lot of lights, what folks call stars? Well, dat's nothin' but de lights shinin' fruh de winders in de sky-man's house.

"Well, as I wuz goin' to say, I went to walkin' on by, an' de sky-man wuz lookin' out de winder, an' he sees me, an' he come to de front do' an' he say, 'Howdy, Ethey!' an' I say, 'Good ev'nin', sir,' fuh I doesn't know what to call him. I ne'er is heyard of no name but 'ceptin' sky-man, an' I ne'er want to call him Mr. Sky-man, fuh he might git mad—you know 'at ef you jes speak to a ole

man goin' 'long de street an' say, 'Howdy, Mr. Orishman' er 'Howdy, Mr. Dutchman,' he'll cuss you in a minnit, an' slap you, too. Anyhow, he say to me, 'Howdy, Ethey!' an' he say, 'Won't you come in an' res' yo'se'f a minnit.' Yas'm, he envite me in at de front do', an' he don't pay no 'tention 'tall to my color. But I ne'er went inside his house, fuh how did I know what kin' of conjurin' tricks he might work on me? He might er turn me into a spider, er a grasshopper, er a sunflower, er a ice-sickle, lack some of dem ole-time people what you have tole me 'bout use to do. No'm, I jes tole him 'at I'd set down on de step ef he please, sir, an' res' a minnit.

"Den what you reckon he do? He reach in de house, an' he gits a glass, an' he reach up an git somethin' white off de do' postes, en he crummels it in de glass. It wuz puah sugar—yas'm, de do postes to dat ole sky-man's house wuz made out of puah sugar! Den he reach down an' pick up a piece of cloud, an' he squeez dat in de glass, an' out come de puahes', clares', crystal water 'at you ever did set your two eyes on. Den he stir it up, an' den he reach up in his lemon tree, what grows right to-side his porch, an' he gits him a lemon, an' he squeez dat in de glass of water. An' den what you reckon he do? He reach down an' pick up a han'ful of hail from his hail-bank by de do', an' he stirs dat in, an' he melt it up good. An' he say, 'Here, Ethey, you drink dat.'

"An' when he sees how susprised I is, he say to me, 'Lordy, gal! I kin pick up a cloud an' squeez wine an' cider out of it ef I wants to,' and he say

to me, 'I bet Mrs. Gilmore ne'er is give you no sich a ice-col' glass of lemonade as dat!'

"But I say, 'Oh yes, sir, she is.' (I don't want him to think 'at I don't know nothin'). An' I say, 'She aint got no sugar do'-postes to her house, an' no lemon tree in her yard, an' no hailstones piled up handy; but she have got ice in de 'frigerator, an' sugar in de pantry, an' she kin ring de telephome bell an' talk in a hole in de wall, an' terreckly a boy will come an' bring her lemons, an' she kin make a great big pitcher plum full of lemonade, an' she kin give me *two* glasses full.' But, Lawdee! I can't he'p from smackin' my mouf—even ef it aint perlite—ev'ry time I think 'bout dat glass of lemonade what I drunk up at de sky-man's house."

"Well," said Mrs. Gilmore, "this is just the kind of an evening to make one remember pleasantly such a trip."

"I jes reckon it is. An', Miss, do you know 'at you is already got plenty of lemons in de 'frigerator, an' you don't even have to ring de telephome bell?"

Mrs. Gilmore took the hint, and Ethey soon had an opportunity to quench her thirst, or, at least, test to the limit the cooling properties of ice-cold lemonade.

"Well, Miss," she said, smiling, after drinking her second glass, "I'm glad dey is some way fuh you an' me to pass our time, sense our comp'ny done lef' us so suddent an' onexpected. It wuz scan'lous fuh dat little chile's papa to git sick an' enterfere wif our enjoyment. I hope nex' time

he'll keep his aches an' pains to hisse'f tell dey visit is ended. I lacked her better en any comp'ny 'at e'er been in dis house. When I fuss heyard 'bout how she ne'er had sawd no colored people, I wuz sho she wuz a onnerry white chile, but she wuzn't. An' set up an' listen to talk! Why, Miss, I n-e-v-er did see nobody 'at could set up an' listen to talk lack dat chile. Mr. Johnson say: 'Trouble wif chillun, dey's too loquacious an' too enterrogacious!' But she wuzn't! Why, I could talk mo' peacerble to her en to any little chile I e'er did set my two eyes on.

"Why, Miss, do you know mos' de chillun, even of my own color, won't half listen to my talk? Dey jes' look up in de tree-tops, an' rock an' hum an' whistle. An' lots of times dey don't make no bones of sayin' to me, 'Shet up, gal! You know you aint been nowheres, er saw nothin' but Stringtown.' I prays de good Lord ev'ry day to keep my han's from hurtin' people."

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"Well, mama," said Ethey, "ef it havn't tooken dat outdacious Pete mos' a munt to git de effec' of dat circus off his lazy bones! Would you b'lieve it, he have jes now got de cornsent of his min' to work on dat brick walk? Well, ef Miss will 'low him a hundert years fuh his job, he may git all de grass from in 'tween dem bricks."

"See heah now, Ethey," said the mother, as she saw the child go into the yard, "don't you go out dare bossin' dat boy. You don't want to make yo'se'f so efficuous 'at Miss can't keep nobody to hitch up de phaeton fuh her, do you?"

"Lawdee no, mama, I has no idee of dat. I's jes goin' out dare star-gazin', as you say."

The mother said no more, and the child went on into the yard. She said nothing to Pete, but was careful to take a seat under a tree within speaking distance. She sat musing until she heard him say:

"See heah now, ole Mr. Bumble-Bee, don't you be singin' yo' bass solos in my yeah, ef you don't want to git yo' haid knocked off! I hasn't got no yeah fuh yo' kin' of music, nohow."

Then' going up to him, she said with a very superior air:

"Now, boy, ef you wuz to once-t tetch Mr. Bumble-Bee, Mrs. Bumble-Bee would come flyin' fruh de air, an' time she got fruh wif you, you would be worsen beauty en you is."

Pete looked sullenly at her a moment, then said:

"Now, I hasn't been botherin' you, gal; so you jes go right on 'way from heah." It would have been better had he invited her to remain. She stayed, and continued in a tantalizing tone:

"Why, boy, doesn't you know 'at you doesn't haf to mo' en think a thing an' Mrs. Bumble-Bee know it, jes de same as ef you done whisper it in her yeah? But you better not try to whisper in Mrs. Bumble-Bee's yeah, 'cause she is turble stuck-up ol' lady—she live in sich a awful fine house, you know."

Here she stopped for breath, and Pete broke in:

"Where? I'd lack to know where is she got

her fine house? Mrs. Bumble-Bee live in a hole in de groun'. She live in a dug-out—dat is her fine house."

"I know, boy, 'at she have a house under de groun' where she lives in winter-times; but Mrs. Bumble-Bee have a fine summer res'dence. She have a fine house, fuh I have sawd it, an' it have lots of rooms in it." Tiptoeing and bowing, thus keeping time to her enumerations, she continued: "An' some of her rooms is lineded wif pink satin, an' some of her rooms is lineded wif red satin! Uh-uh! Uh-uh! boy, but it's fine!" turning her head and looking first at the sky and then at the boy—"but she won't let a colored person step dey foot inside her house. She is not beholdin' to colored servants, 'cause all her fine eatin's is done cooked an' pile up high on her dinin'-room table; so, you see, she isn't got no *need* of colored servants. Yas," turning her eyes wildly, and now and then glancing at the boy, who, glad of an excuse to stop work, was listening attentively, trying at the same time to hide his amusement, "her table in her dinin'-room is jes pile up mos' to de house-tops wif puah honey. Oh, but she is a high-haided ole lady! An' she don't take nuffin off nobody. Ef ole Mr. Bumble-Bee come in her house, findin' fault wif her eatin', she buck right up to him an' say 'at what she have don't suit he taste, he kin do lack little ole Mrs. Hummin' Bird—fly on away an' git somethin' better."

"What is de matter wif you, gal? Is you done went plum 'sides yo'se'f? You's gittin' so 'at you can't tell de truth 'bout nuffin! White folks done

laugh at dem long-winded yarns of yourn tell you thinks it's smart to tell stories. Does you know what happen to ole Mr. Hanakias an' his wife in de Bible fuh tellin' stories?"

"Yas, Gawd strack 'em daid 'cause dey say t'at dey wuzn't rich when dey wuz. You see, you can't learn me nuffin."

"Well, it's jes as bad to 'tend lack folks is got mo', an' is richer en dey is. Now, you know, 'at you is tellin' a story 'bout ole Mrs. Bumble-Bee bein' so rich an' livin' in sich a fine house—summer res'dence, as you call it."

"No, I's tellin' you de Lawd's trouf, boy. Now, you look at me an' listen, an' I kin tell you so 'at you can't by no hook er crook miss it. You go down by ole Aunt Susannah Williamsses, an' you look in de corner by her front gate, in dat great big bush of hollyhocks, an' you'll see Mrs. Bumble-Bee's summer res'dence."

Here Ethey, putting one hand over her mouth and the other to her side, laughed immoderately at Pete, who could only look sheepish and say:

"You better take keer, gal, 'bout dem big yarns. You'll git so 'at you can't, not to save yo' soul, tell de truf."

"Pull yo' grass, nigger! Pull yo' grass! I's goin' to be a high-learnt school-teacher some day, an' I'll learn you mo' en you e'er is heyard tell of."

"See heah, gal," bristling up in anger, "you better min' how you call me nigger, ef you don't want to git hurt. 'Side, don't you fuhgit 'at you is mos' de color of dat blackbird up dare settin'



on dat lim'; but you isn't half as smart, fuh she kin fly up to de moon, ef she wants to."

"Oh, shet up, boy! When I wants to promer-nade 'roun' up in de sky, I'll git me a sky-carr'age an'," turning her head disdainfully, "I won't need you to hitch up fuh me. I'll jes take a seat in it' an' work de treadles, lack a sewin' machine, an' fly on away. An' when I comes to a country what have de houses all made out of diments an' silver, an' what have de streets made out of puah solid gol', I'll light down on it, an' eat ginger-bread an' peppermint candy, an' drink lemonade tell I gits tired, an' den I'll fly on away to some yuther country. But won't I be flyin'! An' won't I feel sorry fuh you, settin' down heah in de brilin' hot sun, tryin' to pick de grass out from heah in 'tween dem bricks?"

"Yas," he answered, "you look lack travellin' 'roun' in a sky-carr'age, when you don't own no kin' er conveyance but 'ceptin' a stick-horse. Where you goin' to git dat sky-carr'age, I'd lack to know?"

"Why, I kin make it, ef I can't fin' nobody else smart 'nough to make it."

Ethey loved to speak of herself to Pete as smart, because nothing made him more indignant.

"Yas," said she, smiling, "I'll git me some gol' an' silver, an' spin it up fin' as cobwebs, an' I'll work it all up nice, an' I'll make my sky-carr'age out er it. Den, I'll git me some redbird feathers," bowing and tiptoeing, "an' some blue-bird feathers, an' some yaller-hammer feathers, an'

I'll stick 'em all on my han's an' arms an' bres'; an' when I comes flyin' fruh de air I'll mos' put yo' eyes out. Why, boy, you can't no mo' look at me an' my sky-carr'age en you kin look de sun straight in de eye. Did you e'er look de sun straight in de eye? Try it. You can't no mo' do it en nuffin."

"Yas," he said, "I see you now, flyin' 'roun' up in de sky. An' sposen you wuz to meet a cyclone in de big road up dare—what would 'come er you an' yo' gol' an' silver carr'age, an' all dem diffe'nt kin' er feathers what you is been strackin' people blin' wif? No, gal, you isn't goin' fruh no air flyin'—dat is, not 'fore Gab'el blows dat horn er hissinn. An' you isn't goin' to be in no hurry den, 'cause you is got to take back all dem big stories you is been tellin' down heah. An' it's goin' to take you a long time, 'cause you is tole so many. Dat story 'bout ole Mrs. Grasshopper lightin' her house wif lightnin'-bugs—dem new kin'er 'lectric lights—is 'nough to keep you out of heaven a long time."

"I doesn't pay no 'tention 'tall to you, boy, fuh I know 'at you isn't aigerated. You wouldn't know de dictionary ef you wuz to meet it in de big road. An' ef you wuz to turn dat ole long mouf of yourn wrong side out-ards, you couldn't, not to save yo' soul from torment, say a French word." Then, waving her hand and tossing her head, she walked quickly away, leaving Pete no opportunity to reply, except by a look, half indignation and half amusement.

## CHAPTER X

"Come right in, honey," said Aunt Vesta, as she saw Ethey at the open door.

"Good evenin', Sis' Hunter," said she, standing hesitatingly in the doorway. "I hasn't been down to see you fuh a good while, 'cause I have been so ockerpied goin' to school."

"Well, I have cert'n'y missed you ve'y much, but you have been better employed en listenin' to my ramblin' talks 'bout thin's 'at's past an' gone. Have a cheer, honey. I know you enjoys yo' school. Tell me somethin' 'bout it, chile. How is you gittin' on?"

"Why, jes fine, fuh as I kin tell. We sings an' repeats our memory verses, an' Miss Ella 'lows us a little time ev'ry day to tell each other stories fuh a change."

"Well, you all enjoys dat change, don't you, honey? An' you al'ays stan's at de haid of yo' class dare, I'll bet."

"I don't know'm," said Ethey modestly, "I tole 'em 'bout Mr. and Mrs. Fish's house, an' Mr. an' Mrs. Snake's house—dat same story I tole you an' Miss one time—an' Miss Ella laugh an' laugh, an' dem little colored chillun cackled worser en a lot of chickens. An' dat little bricketty Johnny—what you reckon he do when my story wuz ended? Why, he hop up an' say:

"When I went fishin', one time, I saw ole Mr.

Snake settin' in a rockin' cheer on de creek bank, eatin' ice-cream an' cake, an' ole Mrs. Snake wuz crammin' his pockets plum full of candy an' oranges.' An' den dem little chillun holler an' laugh an' ac' scand'lous in dat school.'"

"An' yo' memory verses, honey—what kinder memory verses? Scripture verses?"

"No'm, she havn't give us no Scripture verses yit. She have us say, 'Where did you come from, baby dear?' She tries to make us talk mighty proper. She tells us we has to stop swallerin' half our words. She gives us memory verses to make us say all our words clear an' proper. I'll show you how she do," going to the side of the room. "Now, we'll 'tend lack dis wall is de blackboard. Miss Ella takes a ole rag an' wipes off de board lack dis," going through the motion of erasing from the imaginary blackboard. "Den, she takes a piece of chalk—so," repeating aloud and going through the motion of writing and punctuating the following verse:

Where did you come from, baby deah?  
Out of ev'rywhere into heah;  
Where did you git your eyes so blue?  
Out of the sky, as I come through.  
Where did you git that little teah?  
I found it waiting when I got heah.

"Now, I does my bes' to say it jes lack Miss Ella tells me," she said, turning to Aunt Vesta, "I gits up an' I makes my bow, lack dis," bowing and repeating the verse in a prim way, with a few gestures, and bowing demurely when she had finished. "Then," she continued, "Mary gits up,

an' she do lack dis," imitating Mary by bending the body from the waist, "an' she commenstes, but Mary, she always fuhgits." She then recited the same verse with much rolling of the eyes, stammering and twisting her apron, bowing when she had finished. "Then," she went on, "Johnny commenstes—Johnny is sich a boy, an' he has to be so bricketty! He hops up, an' he say, jes lack dis," and with a quick, nodding jerk of the head she proceeded to recite in a bold, monotonous voice the same verse, and ended by giving the same quick jerk of the head, almost falling into her seat. "Then Lonie she gits up, an' she commenstes to try to say it. Lonie makes me so tired; she al'ays gits so skeer'd." Ethey made a timid, half-frightened bow, and with the backs of her hands to her face, ready to wipe away a tear, the corner of her mouth drawn down and her lips twitching, she went over the same verse, sobbing and wiping her eyes. When she had reached the last line, she burst into a flood of tears, and with her face buried in her hands fell into the chair behind her."

"Well, now, dat is jes real interesstin', as my white people use to say. An', honey, dey isn't no mistake but you said them memory verses better en them yuther chillun."

"Miss Ella tole us 'at we mustn't say 'them' memory verses, but 'those' memory verses," said Ethey, apologetically, to Aunt Vesta."

"Well, now, thank you, honey. I'll try to recollect dat correction of my lang'age. Dat cert'n'y do make me think of how my Miss

Fanny use to try to make me speak proper. I use to speak mo' proper en I do now. Sense freedom, somehow, I done 'lapsed back. I reckon it's because I am not in de house all de time lack I use to be, imitatin' de language of white people. You know, house servants never did talk lack cornfiel' niggers, as we use to say. Now, ef you will correct me ev'ry time I makes a error of grammer, I'll be a thousand times obliged to you. To tell the trouth, honey, I do so crave learnin' 'at I'm willin' to take it from anywhere an' anybody 'at I kin git it."

"Oh, Sis' Hunter," said Ethey, gleefully, "don't you know 'at you an' me kin git a heap of enjoyment ef I make lack I'm a school-teacher, an' you make lack you's a little schoolgirl goin' to school to me. Co'se, we needn't say nothin' to nobody 'bout it, 'cause you know how colored people what don't want no learnin' is. Dey'd be sho to say 'at we's both crazy."

"Honey, you can't tell me nothin' 'bout colored people. Dey is no reason, chile, why you an' me can't have a secret all to ourse'ves. An' we can be turnin' our visitin' days into school-days. I think it would be fine fuh both of us. You'll be learnin' me knowledge, an' I'll be learnin' you to teach school. You kin practice on me, an' git experience, so when you gits ready to teach school you won't have no trouble. You know, these schools is mighty cranky 'bout *experience*. Now what kinder books must I git? I has a little fuss reader."

"Well," said Ethey, a little embarrassed, "you

know, I can't read myse'f ve'y good yit. We better start in wif memory verses, an' practice on them—*those*—tell we gits our words to runnin' smooth an' proper."

"Now, dat shows right good judgement in yo' idees, honey; 'cause people ought to learn to talk proper befo' dey kin expect to read proper. Why, honey, jes talkin' 'bout learnin' elervates my thoughts an' makes me feel uplifted in speret. Take keer, er you'll have shoutin' in school ef I gits too high-learnt."

"Well," said Ethey, rising and taking a very dignified pose, "we might as well begin now as any time. When anybody makes up dey minds 'at dey wants learnin' in dey haids, dey might jes as well begin an' not be wastin' time talkin' 'bout it."

"Now, that's my idee, too. 'Make hay while de sun shines,' as de Scriptures say."

"Yas'm, an', Sis' Hunter, let's you an' me try to recollect what our colored professor say 'bout 'de,' an' 'dis,' an' 'dat.' He say we mus' quit it right away, an' say 'the,' an' 'this,' an' 'that,' because it's mo' proper."

"Now, that's sensible advice, an' I'll try to keep it in min'. I'm sorry 'at I have 'lapsed back so in my lang'age sense I lef' Furginia. You know, down South I wuz nurse in a French family, an' dey couldn't correck me ve'y good 'cause dey talk French all de time. An', somehow, down dare it seem easier to swaller part er my words, an' twis' an' turn de yuther en it wuz to speak proper, anyhow."

"Well," said Ethey, standing and knocking on the back of her chair, "school is done took up."

"But, honey," interrupted Aunt Vesta, "aughten you to say school is taken up?"

"Yas'm, that do soun' better. Now, who do you want to be when we play school? You can't be Sis' Hunter, 'cause dat don't soun' right, an' it would be imp'dent fuh me to call you Vesta. You can't be Johnny, 'cause he's a boy. Which you ruther be, Lonie er Mary?"

"To tell de truth, honey, I'd ruther be you, but Mary fuhgits," said Aunt Vesta, laughing. "Maybe I'd better be her. Then the mo' you has to pound thin's into my haid, the mo' lack school-teachin' it will be."

Turning to the imaginary blackboard, Ethey went through the motion of erasing and then writing and punctuating the verse above referred to. When she had finished, she turned to Aunt Vesta and said, "Now, Mary, we will heah from you."

"Oh, honey," laughing and hiding her face in her hands, "I'd sho be Mary ef I'd try to say that verse befo' I done heah it a few mo' times."

"Call me Miss Ella, please," said Ethey, with dignity.

"Oh, e'cuse me! Ef you please, Miss Ella, won't you say over de words a few mo' times, tell dey gits mo' 'spression on my min'?"

Then, turning and raising her voice as though addressing a large class, Ethey said, "Rise, an' recite in concert." Aunt Vesta and Ethey, standing face to face, repeated the verse several times.



Then the "make-like teacher" called on Mary again. Aunt Vesta got up, and in a timid, embarrassed manner curtsied and repeated the verse perfectly from beginning to end, receiving much praise from the teacher, the only criticism being that her bow was not quite up to date. Aunt Vesta apologized by saying that her "curchey" was a little old-timey, but as this was a "make-lack" school, couldn't she pretend that her bow was up to date? It was so hard for her to think about her motions and say the words "clear and proper, too."

"En fac', honey," Aunt Vesta continued, "it would be empossible fuh me to learn to bow now, because I been curchin' too long an' too often; fuh us little chillun back in Furginia curchied at ev'ry crook an' turn. We haf to curchey ev'ry time anybody give us anythin', an' ev'ry time we hand anythin' to anybody. To tell de truf, ef anybody look at us, we haf to curchey. Why, honey, us little colored chillun wuz reg'lar supple jacks, we kep' so limbered up curchin'. But dat didn't hurt us. Dat wuz jes bein' polite. Nobody don't lose nothin' by bein' polite. I wuz born polite, an' I hopes to die polite."

"Well," said Ethey, resuming her former dignity, "we mus' not fuhgit an' talk out in school. An' now I'll set those cheers out in a row close to you, an' we'll make lack they is Lonie an' Johnny an' Ethey, an' ef we doesn't have perfect dayportment I'll make 'em stan' on the flo'. Now chillun," raising her voice, "git yo' slates while I put yo' spellin' lesson on the blackboard."

She occupied herself a short time at the board, then, stopping suddenly and looking at one of the empty chairs near Aunt Vesta, she said:

"Johnny, is you eatin' in school?"

Going up to it after going through the motion of running her finger into the mouth of the imaginary child, she gave it a shake and a jerk, and pushing it in front of her, said:

"I am mortified at yo' conduct! Stan' on the flo' tell you knows how to dayport yo'se'f in the schoolroom." Then, turning to Aunt Vesta, she continued: "Don't pay any attention to him, Mary. A boy what don't know how to ac' don't dayserve attention from nobody."

As Ethe was leaving, Aunt Vesta was very profuse in her thanks. "I kin never be half grateful enough to you," she said, "fuh what you have learnt me today, honey, an' we kin all learn from dat little verse. It is a beauteiful thought dare where de baby gits de blue in her eye out of de sky, as she comes through, but finds de tear waitin' fuh her when she gits heah. Now, dare is 'one lesson we kin all git from it, an' dat is, though we sometimes may have de clouds an' rain, we have also de sunshine an' de blue sky, an' we mus' not fuhgit to be thankful."

Ethe was very happy, as she told Aunt Vesta, to have somebody upon whom to practice her learning. Her mother had grown tired of being interrupted in the middle of a sentence by Ethe's reminder that she must not say "dis" for "this" nor "dat" for "that," and had told her in a fit of anger that if she interrupted her again when she

was talking, she would knock her "*haid*" off, reminding her at the same time that she had talked, and gone to school, too, before she, Ethey, was born. Now that Ethey had found so polite and biddable a pupil in Aunt Vesta, her happiness knew no bounds; it was with difficulty that she refrained from divulging her secret and giving Mrs. Gilmore a full description of her afternoon's work.

## CHAPTER XI

The snow had been falling for several hours and the ground was completely hidden. The tall pines were drooping under the weight of their snowy mantles and the fences, which a few days before had been covered with vines, were now transformed into snowy walls. Ethey had just come into the sitting-room to dust the furniture. Her face wore an unusually discontented expression, and as she turned and looked out through the window a sigh escaped her lips. Mrs. Gilmore had an idea that she was regretting that winter was depriving her of her outdoor amusements. The snow was still falling, the great white flakes coming so thick and fast as to shut from view the neighboring houses.

"Haven't we a beautiful snow!" exclaimed Mrs. Gilmore. "Everything is so exquisitely white. The trees are dressed in their bridal robes, and the sky-man's children are throwing down orange blossoms for the bridal wreaths."

"Do you think 'at it look lack a weddin'? I doesn't. It look to me lack ev'rybody wuz daid, an' have dey shrouds wrapt up tight 'roun' 'em, an' 'at de sky-man's chilluns wuz a cryin', an' 'at dis ole winter wuz freezin' up dey little tear-draps. An' aint it 'nough to make dem little sky-chilluns cry when dey doesn't know what is become of little ole Mr. an' Mrs. Grasshopper, an' all dem little ants what has been enjoyin' deyse'ves so fine

in dis yard all summer? An', now 'at winter is come, I reckon' folks can't do nothin' but stay in de house an' work. But when we gits to heaven we'll git a chance to res' ouse'ves; fuh Gawd don't make people work deyse'ves to death. Now, jes won't you, please, ma'm, look at dat ole pianer lag wif all dem curley-cues on it? Don't you know 'at Gawd wouldn't put up wif dat foolishness up in heaven? No'm, He wouldn't 'low his pianer lags cut up lack dat. Why, dat is nuffin but a dus' ketcher, an' you have to mos' break your fingers off to git de dust out of dem hills an' hollers; 'sides, dey aint no dus' 'tall up in heaven, but 'ceptin' gol' dus'!—an' you know gol' dus' wouldn't worry people. An' ef it wuz to accidently light down where Gawd don't want it, He'd jes have a sof' balmy breeze come an' waf' it away.

"An', Miss, now dat beauteiful garden what dem fuss people live in—didn't it have a lot er beauteiful flowers an' all kin's er fruits an' vegiturbles in it?"

"Yes, it was a bower of loveliness."

"Yas'm, I bet 'at it wuz, an' I bet 'at it wuz jes plum full er birds an' butterflies an' I bet 'at ole Mrs. Bumble-Bee pick herse'f out de ve'y beauteifuls' spot in it, an' ac' lack she own dat whole garden! An' ole Mr. Grasshopper,"—laughing,—“did he have de imp'dence to go straddlin' 'roun' in dat garden spittin' anbeer on ev'rythin'? You know, he is got de imp'dence er Ole Nick. An' it wuz summertime always, wuzn't it, er dem people couldn't er live out-of-doors in grape ar-

bers an' sich places? An' I bet 'at winter wuz sent on 'em fuh a punishment! Now, jes wuz'nt it?—'cause dey ne'er have to werry dey mines 'bout nothin', not even dey cloze. Wuzn't dem de people what ne'er have nothin' to do but git up in de mornin' an' pin on dey buttonhole bouquets an' go gallervantin' 'roun' lookin' fuh enjoyment?

"Oh, but your yard doesn't look lack no garden now. Miss, what do you reckon is become er all dem little ants? An' what you reckon is become of Mrs. Tarpin an' Mrs. Squirrel an' Mrs. Rabbit? How kin dey git dey dinners dis day? Dat ole snow is jes thick all o'er de pasture lack it is in dis yard, fuh I kin see it from de kitchen winder. Ole Mrs. Screechowl's house down in de cedar tree is plum covered wif snow. An' I'll bet 'at little ole Mrs. Squirrel won't step her foot on de groun' dis day. But won't dem hick'nuts come in handy now fuh little ole Mrs. Squirrel? Yas'm, an' don't you recollect' how she would come right up to-side you an' git dem percans what you laid on de groun', an' run off under a tree an' dig an' scratch in de groun', an' put dem percans in dare? An' what a time she would have pushin' 'em down hard in de ground! She mos' have to stan' on her haid sometimes. An' den' Miss, when she'd cover 'em up, don't you recollect' how she would take dem little ole fingers of hern an' twis' an plat de grass up good 'roun' 'em? But she can't dig in dis ole snow an' git none today.

"But, I tell you, she mus' er put some away up

in de tree, 'cause she is too long-haired to git lef'—don't you think so? I'll bet 'at she'll brag an' tell ev'rybody what a time she have gittin' dem hick'nuts, fuh don't you recollect' how ole Benjerman Tilman bark at her an' try to make her git out of dat hick'nut tree? Oh, but dat ole black rascal is sich a hitercite! Why, he 'tends 'at dem hick'nuts wuz his hick'nuts! Yas'm, he tole her to git out er *his* hick'nut tree an' stop stealin' *his* hick'nuts! An' he tole her 'at when he want her to gether his hick'nuts he'd sen' fuh her, an' give her a dollar an' a half a day. Oh, but ole Benjermin Tilman do make me laugh! He have so much imp'dence. But little ole Mrs. Squirrel don't pay no 'tention 'tall to his foolishness. She jes go on higher an' higher up dat tree, shakin' her tail at him. She don't try to shake her fis' at him—she is so busy clammin' dat tree. She jes shake an' flourish dat tail at him worser en my gran'mama do dem peefowl feathers when she is keepin' dem flies off her table. But dey isn't no flies on Mrs. Squirrel, I'm come to tell you, fuh she have her eyes bug out. An' she is always up an' a-comin', an' she have a lot er fun 'bout her; she knows how to take a joke, too. She isn't skeerd er Benjerman Tilman, neither, an' she tell him to cheese his racket when he holler at her. Oh, but he do git awful mad at her when she jaw him! He jumps an' hollers an' mos' cusses 'cause he can't clam dat tree. Oh, but he is a honey!

"But, Miss, you isn't never saw a rabbit an' a squirrel scrap? I'll bet 'at you hav'nt! Yas'm,

I has, an' I'll tell you how come it: Well, one time ole Mrs. Squirrel got awful mad at Mr. Rabbit, cause Mr. Rabbit done been livin' in her house an' done been owin' her rent a long time, an' he won't pay her. So, Mrs. Squirrel, she come to Mr. Rabbit's house, an' she say he got to pay her dat money. She say dat she done put up wif his foolishness jes as long as she goin' to. An' she say: 'I want my money, sir, an' I's goin' to have it, ef I have to take it out of yo' hide.' Mr. Rabbit, he say: 'I dare you to back it up.' An' wif dat, Mrs. Squirrel she don't do nuffin, but walks right up to Mr. Rabbit an' hit him—*plank*—on de haid! Mr. Rabbit, he lights into Mrs. Squirrel an' he fairly beats de life out of her. I reckon he did kill her daid. Den he wuz so skeerd 'cause some er dem Stringtown animals done sent fuh de perlice 'at he got him a covered wagin, an' he takes his wife an' his little boy rabbit, an' his little girl rabbit, an' his grown son rabbit, an' he goes an' he travels, an' he travels, an' he travels, tell he gits to a great big woods an' comes to where Mr. and Mrs. Bear lives. An' Mr. Bear, he seems awful friendly, an' he lets 'em have one room er his house awful cheap.

"Ev'ythin' go 'long mighty fine tell Mr. an' Mrs. Rabbit an' de little boy an' little girl rabbit go to town one day. Dey done heyard dey wuz a show up dare. De grown son rabbit say he don't want to go to town dat day, so he stay at home. Now, ole Mr. an' Mrs. Bear done heyard 'at grown son rabbits is awful good, ef you kill 'em, an' skin em, an' cut 'em up, an' cook 'em wif



good gravy. So, what do ole Mr. an' Mrs. Bear do but kill dat grown son rabbit, an' skun him, an' cook him wif gravy, an' done et him fuh supper when Mr. an' Mrs. Rabbit got back from town.

"When Mr. an' Mrs. Rabbit come home, an' finds out 'at ole Mr. an' Mrs. Bear done et up dey grown son rabbit dey wuz awful mad. But folks say Mr. Rabbit, he needn't talk, 'cause he done kill Mrs. Squirrel lack a dog. Ole Mr. Bear, he say:

" 'Mr. Rabbit may think he is swif', but he'll fin' he can't run on de same race-track wif me.'

"But, Miss, do you know, it do seem to me 'at dey isn't no kin's of animals walkin' on dis earf but 'ceptin' Pete an' Eli an' Benjerman Tilman an' Susanne. Yas'm, de pidgions is still kurvortin' 'roun' de barn. Miss, you know 'at Pete say 'at dem pidgions know 'at he is dey marster. Well, dis mornin', when he wuz a-walkin' out to de barn, dem pidgions tiptoed up to de aige er de gutter on top of de barn, an' dey peep over an' look at Pete an' say:

" 'Look at de coon! Look at de coon! Look at de coon!'

"An' when I holler an' laugh, an' tell mama at Pete's pigions poke fun at dey marster an' say, 'Look at de coon! Look at de coon!' he got turble 'sulted at me, an' spoke up an' say to me, jes' as spiteful as he kin:

" 'How you know, gal, 'at dey means me? Dey may be talkin' to you.'

"But I tole him 'at I know dey means him,

'cause he look so black walkin' in de snow. Why, he look jes lack a tar ball! But, Lawdy, Miss, how long 'fore dis ole snow will melt away?"

Here a rap at the sitting-room door interrupted the conversation, and Aunt Vesta put her head in the half-open door, saying as she did so:

"Please, ma'm, may I come in?"

"Ethey is very gloomy today," said Mrs. Gilmore to her, as she took the seat in the corner offered her, "because her companions, the birds and bugs and butterflies, are not in the yard to amuse her."

"Po' chile, she ne'er did lack winter-times! Her mama say 'at she always wilts down in de winter. Lawd, honey," turning to Ethey, "don't try to fin' butterflies in a snow-storm. An' you musn't git onhappy 'cause winter is come; fuh you mus' recollect 'at snow an' ice-cicles have got dey missions in life jes de same as dew-drops, even ef de butterfly can't light down on 'em an' sip honey. Don't let troubled thoughts start out wif you in de mornin'. Ef you does, dey will follow you all day long; ef you has 'em on your min', you mus' press 'em out, fuss thin'."

"How kin I press 'em out, please, ma'm? I can't use no flat-iron on my min'."

"Now, jes won't you, please, ma'm, listen to dat chile's argerments! Well, you can't use no flat-iron on yo' min'; but happy thoughts an' a big, broad smile kin do a heap. Don't 'low no pouts on your lips. An' de dus'-rag, ef you use it right," said Aunt Vesta, laughing, "kin do lots toward it. Dey isn't nuffin lack gittin' 'roun' an'

gittin' de house in order to give peace an' comfort to your min'. An' it takes patience an' perseverance to keep out de vexation of speret, chile. Ef we ever gits to heaven, honey, we'll have to work our way. I isn't never heyard of no ter-boggin' slide to heaven. It's up hill all de way. It may be level groun' an' easy walkin' when you gits dare, but it's a rough road clare up to de golden gate. Now, dat lily-white robe an' dat golden harp what you specks to have when you gits dare! Do you know, chile, 'at ef e'er you wears a lily-white robe up in heaven you has got to weave it heah? An' you has to watch mighty keerful to keep from spottin' dat robe. An' dat golden harp! Chile, ef you ever 'spects to play on dat harp up in heaven, you mus' be learnin' to make sweet music heah below. Now, tell de trouf, honey—don't you feel happier dustin' dat cheer en you did settin' in dat kitchen 'hin' de stove?"

Here the telephone rang, and as Mrs. Gilmore left the room Ethey replied:

"Yas, ma'm, I does, 'cause lots of times bad angels talks to me in de kitchen. Lots of times when Miss calls me to come dus' de furniture, dat bad angel say to me, 'Don't you do it. You doesn't haf to dus' de furniture fuh Miss,' 'an ef I stay in dat kitchen I'd be mad all day. But no, sir, I gits right up' an' say, 'I doesn't keer ef I doesn't haf to, I's goin' to dus' dat furniture fuh Miss anyhow!' An' dat ole bad angel soon learns 'at I won't have none of her monkeyin' wif me. An' when I comes in heah, an' Miss

gits to tellin' me dem quare tales 'bout all de cur'-us people what ever did walk on dis earf, I's glad to dus' de furniture, an' I wish 'at I could stay in white folks' house all de time."

"Uh-uh! Chile, I know you does. But don't you pay no 'tention to bad angels—dey'll git you in trouble ef you does."

"Oh, I doesn't. Dey tries to git me in too much trouble. Sometimes dey talks to me 'bout perfumery. Yes'm, dey does. Why, jes dis mornin', when Miss went out to talk in de telephome, didn't dat bad angel up an' say to me, 'Gal, you see dat perfumery on dat table!' But, gent'man, I doesn't let on 'at I heyard her. I jes hike up my haid in de air an' I walks straight out of dat room, an' I doesn't go in dare no mo' tell Miss go back, neither, 'cause I knows all I has to do is to say to Miss, 'Dat perfumery sho do look temptin,' an' she takes de bottle an' fairly baptizes me in perfumery. She hardly leaves a dry thread on me; she squirts it all over me."

"Dat's right, honey! White people will mos' always he'p you out when you's tempted, ef you lets 'em know. Dey don't want to see you tempted beyon' what you's able to bear. But I reckon Satan an' bad angels will always tempt colored people when dey is perfumery 'roun'. An', you know, folks don't have to see you take perfumery to know 'at you done tuck it. I sho do wush 'at I could er been to yo' baptizin', an' Miss might er baptize me, too. I believe in sprinklin' when it comes to perfumery. I am plum out of perfumery, too. It do 'vaperate so!

Now, las' quarterly meetin', when I dress myse'f an' went to git my perfumery, it all done 'vaperate. But I didn't worry my min' 'bout it, 'cause I know it aint long tell Christmas, an' I'll be sho to git a present of some. Mary Spicer say 'at she think Hoyt's coloyne is de grandis' perfumery in de worl'; but I don't—I lack white rose. I lack aristocratic perfumery myse'f—in a pretty box, wrapt in tissue paper. Why de very rattle er tissue paper is enspirin' to me—tissue paper is so r'fined!"

"Why, would you b'lieve it, Sis' Hunter, dat ole bad angel talk so turble to me 'at I haf to go give little blin' Willie his Teddy-bear book befo' Christmas. Yas, ma'm, dat ole bad angel say to me, 'Keep it yo' se'f, gal—keep it yo' se'f. You needs enjoyment same as little blin' Willie.' But no, sir! I gits right up an' goes right down dare, an' I give dat Teddy-bear book to little blin' Willie's mama, an' I tole her to put it away fuh him tell Christmas. Why, ef I had er listened to dat bad angel an' kep' dat picture-book a day longer, I'd er had sich a neah feelin' fuh it 'at I couldn't er parted wif it Christmas—not to save my soul! Dat bad angel would er argured me out of it. An', don't you know, Sis' Hunter, 'at ole Aunt Susannah Williams wuz dare when I gave dat book to little blin' Willie's mama, an' direkly I heahs her ole long mouf whisperin' in Mrs. Scrutchfiel's yeah sayin':

"'Aint dat jes lack dat little crazy nigger to give a picture-book to a little blin' chile?"

"I never let on 'at I heahs her. I knowd 'at

Willie couldn't see de pictures, but I know what little monkeys dem little colored chilluns what lives nex' do' to them is. Why, dey won't mo' en set dey eyes on dem Teddy-bears playin' leap-frog tell dey'll git all dem bear actions an' play out dat whole book to Willie. Why, dey'll make dey little ole feet patter on dat flo' so natchul an' bear-lack 'at little blin' Willie will think 'at dat house is jes plum full of bears, an' he'll be tickled, an' mos' skeerd to death, too. He'll be laughin' one minnit an' cryin' de nex'."

"Co'se he will, honey! Dat po' little blin' chile will git lots of enjoyment out er dat picture-book what you bought wif yo' Santa Claus money. But, Lawdee, Miss," as Mrs. Gilmore re-entered the room, "talkin' 'bout telephomes, aint dey de mos' 'stonishin' thin's on dis earf? Well, to tell de trouf, I don't see why we don't all jes drap daid from puah 'stonishment. It took me a long time to git use to de railroad an' cable-cars; den heah comes along de autermobile—dem funny carr'ages what runs wifout horses an' look lack dey got dey haid cut off. When I fuss see 'em twis'n' an' turnin' an' runnin' in ev'ry direction, wif nothin' pullin' er pushin' 'em, I use to say to myse'f, 'Lawd, is I in my right min' or not?' But dat telerphome, where you talk through a hole in de wall, an' folks miles an' miles away talk back to you—dat sho do beat de beaters! I often times wonders what nex'? I wouldn't be one bit 'stonished ef we'd git to ridin' 'roun' up in de air in dem sky-carr'ages what Ethey love to talk so much 'bout. An' Ethey may be right when

she talk about telephomin' to de man in de moon. I can't he'p from wondering what my ole Marster Samuel Street would say ef he could step his foot on dis earf agin.

"But, Lawd, how diff'ent times is out heah from way back in Furginia! Miss, do you know how come me to wade through dis ole snow an' come up heah dis mornin'? I jes come to git you to write me a letter back to Furginia."

"Why, I thought," said Ethey, "'at you have come 'cause yo' wood done give out."

"Don't talk up lack dat, chile, tell folks done ax you questions, er dey might say 'at you is 'sassy,' honey. An' you know 'at nobody don't lack a 'sassy' chile."

"Yas'm, I know it," said Ethey, a little taken back, "but dat is what I thunk when you fuss come in."

"Yas, dat may be, honey, but don't you even tell people what you thunk tell dey done ax you. Lawd, honey, you is eatin' yo' white bread now, an' many de time, ef you lives to git raised up an' be a ole woman, 'at de picture of Miss, an' dis big, bright grate fire an' warm room, will come to you. But I do hope, chile, 'at it won't come to you when you is col' an' hongry an' lonesome; fuh it sho'ly is pitterful to be col' an' hongry an' lonesome when you hasn't nothin' but recollections of happy days to comfort you.

"Now, Miss, I do know 'at recollections kin make you feel miserabler en anythin' on dis earf. Now, dis mornin', when I wake up in my col' room an' see de groun' all white wif snow, an'

de snow still comin' down lack it aint got no notion of quittin', an' I fin' only a few sticks of wood an' a little kin'lin' to carry me through de day, it sho did seem to me 'at de snow done fell on my heart an' done freez it up tight. An' when de recollection come to me of my ole home back in Furginia, an' my ole Marster, an' Miss Fanny, an' Miss Mary, an' dat cellar an' pantry jes plum full of good thin's to eat, I felt 'at I wuz freezin' an' starvin' to deaf, an' I jes haf to come up heah to git you to write me a letter back to Furginia. Maybe ef I could git a letter from 'em it would do me some good. I am sho it would warm up my heart an' make it beat lighter, fuh I sholy is 'spondent an' heavy-hearted today."

"I shall be glad to write the letter for you, Aunt Vesta, but first go to the kitchen and have Malinda give you a cup of hot coffee."

"Oh, thank you, ma'am, she done done it—she give it to me when I stop in de kitchen to pass de time of day wif her, an' I sho' am thankful fuh it. Lawd, honey," turning to Ethey, "how seein' a little colored chile lack you heah in white folks' parlor, listenin' to stories an' askin' all kind of questions, an' white folks not thinkin' 'at you is imp'dent, makin' yo'se'f so free, do remin' me of ole times back in Furginia, when I wuz a little colored chile lack you an' ole Marster wuz a-livin'. Po' dear ole Marster! Lawd, chile, I kin see my ole Marster now, jes as plain as ef it wuz yistiddy. I kin see him right now gittin' in his gig—yas, it wuz a green gig 'at he always driv to Richmon' in, an he always driv a grey



horse name Jefferson. An' when he'd go to Richmon' to git groceries, ole Uncle Soloman would always have to go, too, an' he would drive a little kin'er covered wagin, an' would go in dat to bring back de groceries in. An', chile, folks didn't git groceries den lack dey do in dese days. Why, ef anybody had er give my ole Marster a little ole dollar's worth of sugar, done up in a brown paper, I do believe in my soul he would er knock 'em in de haid wif it—he would er been so ensulted. No, ended, he would order a barrel of brown sugar, an' a barrel of loaf sugar, an' a box of reasins, an' a box of crackers, an' a kit of mackerel, an' a barrel of New Orleans molasses. But, oh my, when he'd git home,, but wouldn't us little colored chillun enjoy ourse'ves! Ole Marster would send out to de cabin' fuh us to come in de house, an' when we'd git in dare, he'd say:

“Who love ole Marster?”

“Den we'd all holler aut an' say: 'Me, sir!' 'Me, sir!'”

“Den he'd say: 'Who kin sing an' dance "Yankee Doodle" fuh ole Marster?'”

“An' we'd holler an' say: 'Me, sir!' 'Me, sir!' An' wif dat we'd all commence to sing 'Yankee Doodle,' an' we'd hop an' dance all over ole Marster's room. Den he'd give us crackers an' candy an' reasins. Oh, but we'd always be tickled jes plum to death when ole Marster would sen' fuh us to come in de house, 'cause we'd always know 'at he have got a treat fuh us.

“Well, now, Miss,” as Mrs. Gilmore asked the

name and address of the friend to whom she would have her write, "I don't—not to save my soul—know who to tell you to write to, 'cause I don't know who is daid an' who is livin'; but I's sho 'at mos' anybody what would git de letter would know who I mean it fuh ef you would tell 'em 'at I use to b'long to ole Colonel Samuel Street, an' 'at he live clos' to Richmon', an' have four sons—Charles an' Williams an' Samuel an' Park—an' two daughters—Miss Fanny an' Miss Mary.

"An' how I did love Miss Fanny, 'cause she owned me! Miss Mary ne'er did take no intrust in life. She wouldn't do a lick er work. She jes lay up in her room on a green baize sofa an' read novels; an', Miss, ef you believe me er not, she ne'er would eat no kind of meat but duck an' ham. An' now, please, ma'm, ef you jes would write dat in yo' letter ev'rybody would know who I mean, fuh ev'rybody in dat whole country know 'at Miss Mary wouldn't eat no kind of meat but duck an' ham. Aunt Patsy wuz Miss Mary's maid, but Miss Mary make me call her Cousin Patsy, 'cause she say 'at it make her so womanish ef I calls her aunt. Well, Aunt Patsy—fuh she wuz my aunt—she used to take de little covered wagin an' go way across de riber to git duck fuh Miss Mary; an' she'd come back wif dat wagin plum full of ducks, an' we have a duck house, down by a pon' where she'd put de ducks.

"Miss Mary sho would er been a cur'osity to you, Miss. Sometimes us little colored chillun use to slip up to Miss Mary's room, an' dare she

would be a-layin' on dat green baize sofa jes cryin' fit to break her heart; an' Aunt Patsy would be rubbin' her haid an' pullin' out de grey hairs, an' we'd say: 'What's de matter wif Miss Mary?'

"Den, Aunt Patsy would come a-tiptoin' 'cross de room, shakin' her haid an' whisperin', an' wavin' us up in de corner, an' she'd say:

" 'Hush! Hush! She's cryin' 'bout dem people in dem norvels. Set still dare in de corner, an' don't you dare breath out loud.'

"But Miss Fanny wuzn't dat way. She wuz a tomboy. She could clam trees! She use to git up early in de mornin' in de summertimes an' gather fraish flowers wif de jew on 'em, an' when she'd git dat house perfumed lack de garden er Eden, she'd put on her red oil chinz calico dress, wif white ruffles in de neck an' sleeves, an' set down in a low cheer by her mahogany sewin' table, an' roll an' whip nansook ruffles. An' she'd have a little cheer fuh Tulip—Tulip wuz her maid—an' she'd learn Tulip how to roll an' whip an' hemstitch. An' Miss Fanny, she have lots er admirers, too; but Miss Mary say 'at de sun didn't shine on de man 'at she would marry. An' Aunt Meriky, down at de quarters, say 'at dat's 'cause her admirer wuz daid—'at she wuz engaged to Mr. Archebaldas Ball an' he die, an' dat's why Miss Mary don't take no intrust in life.

"Miss Fanny ne'er have no patience 'tall wif Miss Mary. She try to git her to go out in de fraish air, but she won't—well, sometimes, when de sun wuz mos' down, she would persuade her to go over on a hill, close to where some yuther

white ladies live. Me an' Rose—a yuther little colored girl—use to go wif 'em to carry dey little split-bottom cheers fuh 'em to res' deyse'ves in when dey gits dare. Oh, but me an' Rose use to have lots of fun! We'd take dem little split-bottom cheers an' turn 'em upside down on our haid, an' we'd run 'way ahaid of Miss Fanny an' Miss Mary, an' den we'd stop an' set down in dem cheers an' res' ourse'ves, an' when Miss Fanny an' Miss Mary would git up to us, we'd pick 'em up an' run on ahaid agin. When we'd git over on a beauterful hillside, dare would be some yuther young ladies wif dey little colored girls an' dey little split-bottom cheers. Dem white ladies would set down in dem cheers an' sing de beauterfules' songs, an' us little colored chilluns would jine in an' sing as loud as we could. An' when de song wuz ended, we would run an' gather wile flowers an' give 'em to de white ladies. Oh, but how recollections kin bring down de clouds an' shet out de light, an' make you think 'at de sun aint a-goin' to shine no mo'! I don't know what is goin' to become of me ef I don't heah from my people.

"But, please, ma'm, won't you look in my palm an' see whether er not I'se goin' to marry agin?"

"Surely, Aunt Vesta, you would not think of marrying!" said Mrs. Gilmore, in great surprise.

"Do you know that you would lose your pension? Would you give up a comfortable living to marry a man and maybe have to support him? I do hope you are not having beaux?"

"No'm, ended I isn't; no man is e'er set his

foot inside my house sense my husband died. You know, I got a chain an' padlock, an' I keep my gate locked up all de time. But, co'se, dat doesn't keep de gent'men from passin' by an' talkin' to me over de fence. Yuther day, when I wuz out puttin' straw 'roun' my rose-bushes, Brother Anderson Brown stop an' lean on de gate pos', an' say:

"Dat lock an' chain don't look very encouragin' to callers, Sister Hunter,' an' den he say, 'but you hasn't got no lock an' chain on my mouf to keep me from tellin' you 'at you is a very fine-lookin' lady fuh your age.'

"Den he have de imp'dence to tell me 'at I mus' be lonesome, an' ax me ef I don't think 'at I'd be mo' corntented married; but I tell him, 'No!' Den he say to me:

" 'You ought to git married, to have somebody to work fuh you an' take keer of you,' an' he say, 'Why, you oughten to tetch yo' han' to work.'

"But I say to him: 'I never is knowd a colored married lady in my life but have to work, an' work hard.' An' jes as I turns an' walks up on my porch, he holler an' tells me 'at he'll give me a deed to his house an' lot in Stringtown ef I'll marry him. But I thank him an' say:

" 'You know my husban' wuz a ole soldier, an' I'll have my pension,' an' I go right in my house an' shet de do'—an' lock it, too! An' don't you know, he den go off an' tell Brother Furgerson 'at he would er married me, but de Goven'ment beat him to me,—'at dat pension wuz all 'at kep' him from it.

"An' jes yistiddy a man come to my house sellin' hair-oil, an' he tole me 'at he have forty acres of lan' an' a very sweet ole mother livin' in Oklahoma, an', ef I'd marry him an' go out dare to live wif 'em, he'd give me a deed to dat lan'; but I tole him 'at I have done heyard 'bout dem forty acres of lan' before. He tol' me 'at de Af'kin Methodis' preacher recommen' me to him. I tol' him, ef dat wuz so, he could tell de Afkin Methodis' preacher 'at he'd have to recommen' somebody else. Why, he wuzn't nothin' but a fop, wif his hair parted in de middle! An' I'll bet, Miss, 'at he didn't comb his 'head once-t a yeah when his wife wuz livin'! 'Scuse me from these men what go 'roun' lookin' lack a skeer-crow while dey wife is livin', an' jes as soon as she die gits out de currycomb an' tries to be a dude. Why, ef anybody wuz to be big enough fool to marry dat man, I know he would turn hisse'f into a ash-cat de minnit' de ceremony wuz said, an' sit down in de corner an' snuff ashes long as she live to wait on him. 'Sides, I know he never own no forty acres er land er he wouldn't er been goin' 'roun' sellin' hair-oil. An' Jim Johnson say it wuzn't hair-oil even—'at it wuzn't nothin' but false hair dye, 'cause Nancy Gibson bought some an' it made her hair most all come out, an' turned it grey, to boot."

"You keep your pension," said Mrs. Gilmore, with difficulty hiding her amusement. "Don't marry any of them."

"Oh, I isn't goin' to take none of 'em, but yit an' still it's encouragin' to know 'at dey wants me."

A ve'y nice lookin' man entroduce hisse'f to me yuther day an' walk 'long de street wif me. He say he wuz a stranger in de town. He wuz ve'y proper talkin'. He say: 'I's a stranger in de town, don't know many people yat'—he couldn't say yit—an' he say, 'I hopes arfter I done been heah a while to know you much better;' but I tole him, no, 'at I wuz a widder lady an' live all alone, an' I didn't keer 'bout no gent'mans attentions. To tell de trouf, Miss, he turn an' twis' his words so 'at I knowd he wuz good fuh nothin'. De fact is, Miss, airs always makes people 'pear foolish.

"But, Miss, do you know 'at dat ole pension is turble werrysome? Now, ev'ry time when I go to sen' off fuh dat pension, I'll have to take two vulschurs wif me to swear 'at I isn't married agin. I tole dat ole man 'at de cou't-house 'at he ought to know 'at I isn't, when I is still wearin' mournin' fuh my husban'; but it do seem to me 'at he have less reason an jedgement en any man I ever did know.

"Miss, has you seen po' Sister Tildy Tuncil sense she los' her husban'? You know, we have a turble time wif her."

"What is the matter with Aunt Tildy?"

"Well, I jes don't know; she don't seem to know what she is doin' half de time. We have sich a time keepin' her in mournin'. Why, jes dis mornin' I stopped a minnit at Sister Chambers, an' she wuz in dare wif a blue facinator on her haid—an' she wuz cryin' fit to kill herse'f 'bout her husban'! We have to watch her lack a hawk

to keep her from goin' up town dat way. Why, we can't efford to have her scandalize de neighborhood by goin' out of mournin' befo' de year is out. You know she own forty acres in de country, an' we is all 'fraid some man may be waitin' to come to see her."

"Well, that's bad!"

"I tole her dis mornin' 'at she mus' be sho to wear her deep black a year, an' 'at maybe when de year wuz out she might ease up on her mournin'. You see, ef we kin git her safe over de fuss year, she won't be so apt to ac' foolish an' marry, 'cause she'll be use to bein' lonesome an' won't min' it so much."

"Well, let me see your palm. There maybe a preacher marked there for a second husband."

"No, ma'm, no preacher fuh me, ef you please, ma'm! I don't want no kin'er man, but spec'ally no preacher. I draws de line at de preacher. I listens to de preacher jes as long as he is in de *pulpit*; but when he comes down from dat *pulpit* I's gone. Preachers is so werrysome an' spilt. Dey 'spects to have compliments an' big dinners all de time. When dey preaches to us, dey tells us what we kin 'spect when we gits to heaven—walk dem golden streets dat's flowin' wif milk an' honey—but take keer when dey 'sessments don't come up on time! You better not say nothin' to dem 'bout waitin' tell dey gits to heaven fuh dey milk an' honey! No, ma'm! Hard times er good times, sick er well, de preacher an' de heathen mus' git full pay. Now, don't you know, Miss, 'at I think Mericans cert'ny do deserve



some sort of cornsideration. Do you know, I gits mad ev'ry time I see dat ole Chinaman walkin' 'roun' de square wif his shirt on de outside of his pants, an' lookin' so out-landish. I doesn't—not to save my soul—see no use of sendin' all dat money o'er dare to 'em when dey isn't got sense 'nough when dey comes to dis country to ac' lack decent men. Dare goes my tongue agin! My Mis'is, down South, use to say to me: 'Oh, Vesta, Vesta! Yo' tongue will be the death of you yet!' Now, Miss, I know 'at I talks too much, an' I prays to de good Lawd to bridle my tongue, but somehow He don't do it. I reckon He knows 'at I's jes proned to 'spress myse'f, an' He makes excuses fuh me. You know de Scriptures say: 'We is proned to evil as the sparks fly upward.'

"I know 'at de preacher has his trials an' vexations er speret, an' I don't want to be too hard on him. I know 'at aigercated colored people gives de colored preacher a great deal of trouble. Do you know, dey say dey isn't no hell? An' maybe some aigercated white people aint much better. Now, jes las' Sunday, when de preacher read dis Scripture, 'An' Jonas wuz three days in de wale's belly,' de grageratin' class all sniggled an' nudged each other, an' when I wuz walkin' out er church one er dem gals say to me, 'Dat whale story is done exploded!' 'Course, I don't know whether it is er not, but yit an' still I know dey is plenty er mighty quare an' critical Scripture in de Bible.

"Last Sunday night de preacher wuz tellin' us

'bout Elisha. I ne'er did know befo' 'at dey wuz two prophets wif names so much alack—one wuz named Elijah an' de yuther Elisha. Well, he tole us 'at Elisha ask Elijah ef he wouldn't let his mantle fall on him when he went to go up to heaven, an' Elijah tole him, yes, he would, ef he'd be out in de field when he got ready to start. So Elisha wuz dare, an' he saw a charret of fire descend from heaven, an' Elijah set down on dat charret of fire an' went on up to heaven, an', sho 'nough, his mantle fell off an' fell on Elisha. Now, 'course, I ne'er said nothin' out loud, but I say to myse'f: 'Uh-uh! Set down on a naked flame an' go up to heaven, an' not git burnt, an' your mantle fall through de flame, too, an' not git burnt.' Miss, jes as sho as you live, de Bible have some mighty ticklish places in it. I don't say nothin' to de preacher 'bout all dis, 'cause he say 'at dey is so many doubtin' Thomases 'at dey makes de gospel road so rocky 'at it mos' upsets de gospel wagin.

"Brother Johnny Jones tole us las' Sunday, when he got up to exort us, 'at he mos' make up his min' to quit preachin', 'cause it's so hard dese days to edify de congeration. He say 'at ef you don't go up an' mingle wif de stars, folks won't listen to you. An' he say 'at it's mighty hard to pack 'roun' de dictionary an' strain eloquence all de time.

"You know, de singers in de choir is turble opstroporous an' give de preacher lots of trouble, too. Dey either wants to do all de singin' er none. Ef any of us ole people in de church hap-

pens to feel de speret upliffin' us, an' jine in de singin', dat choir shets up its mouf right tight an' won't sing a word tell we stop. Why, dey sets dare an' star in our mouths, an' I know dey can see clare down my th'roat, 'cause my teeth is so snagglety; but I jes think of dis Scripture, 'Open thy mouth an' I will fill it'—an' I sing on. But lots er times dey makes us feel so shamefaced an' mortified 'at we feels lack goin' home an' not goin' inside dat church agin. Dey jes' nudges each other an' laugh at us an' say, 'Dey is ole fogies.' Susannah Williams say 'at she hopes 'at none of dat choir won't go to heaven, fuh she know, ef dey does, dey'll steal all dem golden harps, an' do all de singin' an' playin', too.

"An', Miss, dey do seem to me to be some mighty pitterful places in de Bible, too. Now, heah is one pitterful place, seems to me: You know dat rich young man what run an' fell down at Jesus' feet enquirin' what to do to be saved, an' Jesus tolé him to go sell out an' give ev'rything away? I don't onderstan' dat—why he should haf to give ev'rything away befo' he could git religion; fuh Jesus oughter know 'at dat young man haf to live, even ef he do have religion, an' he haf to have somethin' to live on. He couldn't live on grace an' speret, 'cause de Scriptures say, 'My speret will not always strive with thee.' I don't believe 'at Jesus meant fuh him to sho 'nough do it. He must er said it jes to try his faith. He must er meant fuh him to come jes as near to it as he could. I know Gawd wouldn't expect it, 'cause Gawd is a jest Gawd,

an' He don't expect people to ac' lack dey got no reason, onless He is goin' to take him on up to heaven, lack He done Lazarus.

"An' now 'bout Lazarus, Miss, please, ma'm, what do you think of dis Scripture? I have asked the preachers, but somehow dey mumbles out somethin' I don't onderstan'. Dey do seem to be so proned to make excuses, to keep from ram-sackin' dey min's to answer my questions, anyhow. You know de Scriptures say: 'De rich man, bein' in torment, lifted up his eyes to heaven an' saw Lazarus afar off in Abraham's bosom, an' he begged Lazarus to dip the tip end of his finger in water an' come an' cool his parched tongue.' Now, what I wants to know is, what was Lazarus doin' in Abraham's bosom? It do seem to me 'at hard a time as Lazarus have heah on earth, layin' 'roun' rich men's gates to git crumbs 'at fall from dey tables, he ought er have some sort of liberty up in heaven. He ought er be allowed to fly 'roun' an' see some of de beauties of heaven—walk on dem golden streets er somethin'—enstead of bein' coddled up in Abraham's bosom."

"But do you want me to read your palm, Aunt Vesta, or shall I finish the letter to Virginia?"

"Well, you might read my palm, jes fuh cur'osity, an' den you kin finish de letter."

"Let me see," said Mrs. Gilmore, as she examined carefully the marriage lines. "Why," she exclaimed in surprise, 'you have already been married twice! Once between fourteen and twenty-one, and again before you were twenty-five! Is that so?"

"Kin you sho 'nough see dat in my han'? Yas'm, I has done been married twice; but I had no idee 'at it wuz marked on my han'. Where do you see dat, please, ma'm?"

"There," said Mrs. Gilmore, as she pointed to the two lines on the side of the hand, under the little finger.

"Dat sho is quare! Yas'm, I married my fuss husban' when I wuz a real young gal, soon after freedom, but he never live ve'y long. His name wuz Billy McKinsey, an' he wuz valet to a captain down in Louisiana. He come from New York an' wuz free born. An', Miss, I never will fuhgit de fuss time I saw him. I wuz livin' with Aunt Rosette. She tole me after freedom 'at I could live wif her an' he'p her with her washin', 'cause her daughter Mary wuz sick in bed wif consumption. Well, one mornin' I wuz out in de back yard washin', an' I heah somebody say:

"'Good mornin', Miss!'

"I look 'roun', an' dare where de palin's is tore off is standin' de nices' lookin' young brown-skin colored man 'at I e'er did set my two eyes on. Den he say to me:

"'Miss, kin you tell me where is de closest grocery store?

"I wuz so mortified an' embarrassed 'at I most died, fuh I wuz barefooted an' my dress wuz short an' raggetty, too; but I walk out to him an' say:

"'Yas, sir, ef you'll jes come wif me, I'll show you.' An' I walk up to de corner of de street an' pint out de grocery store to him. He thanks me, an' I goes on back to my washin', but I

couldn't keep from thinkin' 'bout dat young man. I couldn't, not to save my soul, git dat young man's shiny eyes an' de stripes up de sides er his pants off my min'. Nex' day I wuz keepin' de flies off of Mary, an' Aunt Rosette come in an' say:

"'Ves', dat young man what you show de way to de grocery store is in de front room an' he wants to see you.' Oh, but how dat did make my heart go pit-a-pat! But I didn't let on to Aunt Rosette. I jes' say:

"'What kin he want to see me 'bout?'

"I went up in de room, an' he give me a box wif five oranges in it, an' he say:

"'Here is some oranges what I brung you fuh showin' me de way to de grocery store.'

"'No, sir,' I say to him, 'you mus' keep yo' oranges. I don't charge you nothin' 'tall fuh showin' you de way to de grocery store.'

"I wuz so 'shamed an' trembly I couldn't hardly stan' up, an' I know my face must er been red, 'cause it wuz burnin' lack fire. He told me 'at he want me to have 'em, an' he talk a few minnits, den he went on away. Nex' day I wuz out in de yard washin' agin, an' Aunt Rosette come out dare an' say:

"'Ves', dat young man what brung you dem oranges yistiddy is in de front room, an' say he wants to see you.' My Lawd in heaven, Miss! I wuz so skeerd 'at I felt I could take to de cane-break an' never stop runnin'. But Aunt Rosette say to me: "'Go on in dare, gal. He is a nice young man, an' he aint goin' to hurt you.'

"When I got to de do', an' glimpsed him, an' dem stripes up de sides er his pants, I couldn't to save my soul go in dare—I couldn't, not to save my soul, budge out er dat do'way. He come across de room to me, an' give me a fish dat long," measuring from tips of the fingers to the elbow.

"I didn't know what to do, so I say to him:

" 'Who tole you 'at I wuz so fon' er fish?'

"He laughed out loud an' say, 'Oh, I jes guessed it.'

"De nex' day he come agin, an' dis time I wuz lookin' from 'hind de curtains, an' soon as I saw him turn de corner I know 'at he wuz comin' to see me; so I run way out in de yard an' hid 'hind de ash-hopper. But Aunt Rosette come out dare an' say:

" 'Ves', go in dare an' see dat young man, an' don't you go to actin' foolish; fuh he is a nice young man an' gits good pay, an' you mus' recollect' 'at you isn't got no home but heah wif me, an' dey aint no tellin' how long I's goin' to live, an' you's mighty fah from your kin people, way back in Furginia.'

"I tole her dat I jes couldn't go where dat young man wuz no mo', 'cause it wuz so hard on my nerves. It's de Lord's trouf, Miss—I'd be so trembly an' palpertatin 'at I wouldn't be fittin' fuh nuffin fuh half a day. She say to me:

" 'Shet up dat foolishness, gal, an' go on in dare.'

"An' I went, an' he give me a great big box of candy an' tole me 'at he want me to marry him. Miss, it's de gospel truth, ef I had er drunk a

whole barrel of wine my haid couldn't er swum worser. An' when he took hold of my han', I wuz so skeerd 'at I jerked away from him an' rund out in de yard where Aunt Rosette wuz. Den Aunt Rosette went in dare to see him, an' fixed it up, an' set de day fuh de weddin'. Co'se, I didn't have no long dress an' no dress opened befo'; so Aunt Rosette loaned me a white cross-barred muslin wrapper wif a long trail, what a white lady done give her, an' she pinned a long white mosquito bar on my haid, wif white flowers, for my bridal vail, an' two colored girls dressed in white hel' lighted candles, an' me an' Billy wuz married. Now, Miss, I do know 'at ef I hadn't er felt so embarressed an' trembly, no sho 'nough queen could er felt grander er been happier en I wuz, standin' on de floor holdin' Billy's arm.

"But Lawd, Miss, somehow I never did feel 'at Billy b'long to me fuh long! We went to housekeepin' in a little house wif one room an' a shed room, an' sometimes when he'd start out in de mornin' I'd stan' an' look at him from 'hind de curtains, an' I'd say to myse'f 'at sholy it wuz too good to be true 'at dat nice lookin' young colored man b'long to me. An', Miss, he didn't b'long to me fuh long. He went away to Mobile wif his captain, an' staid a month an' come home sick, an' only lived two days. I didn't want him to go, 'cause I have a turble persentment 'at somethin' would happen to him; but he say to me, 'Would you ruther I'd stay heah an' not have no money, er go away an' make a hundred dollars?'



'Course I didn't want to stan' in de way of his gittin' along in de worl'; so I cornsented.

"Endurin' de street-fair I went wif dem little white chillun to see de movin' pictures, an' as I set dare an' watch dem beauterful pictures of hill-sides an' windin' roads an' paths, an' dem sweet-hearts promernadin' 'roun' wif all de actions of live people, I couldn't he'p but think 'at dey do certn'y repersent dis life; fuh life on dis earf isn't nothin' but a lot of movin' pictures. An' it do seem sometimes 'at de prettier de picture de sooner it goes by, an' de prettier an' smother de path de quicker it comes to a end.

"Now, I do love to talk religion, an' I try to live it; but do you know 'at I often fin's God's ways very agervatin'? Maybe I do talk too much; but dey is times when I think 'at He might er let de smooth path run' long a little further befo' He put de rough places in my pathway. I kin look back an' see all de paths I ever is followed; but I has one regret an' grief: None of my paths e'er did lead up to no school-house of learnin'. No'm, I ne'er did go to school. I use to go to dancin' school to take my little white chillun, an while dat wuz well an' good—fuh I could set by waitin' fuh de chillun an' learn many beauterful actions an' daymeanyers—but yit an' still I wuzn't gittin' aigercated in books. An', Miss, I did always so crave book-learnin'. I wanted to be able to pick up any book in mos' any lang'age an' read it, lack my young Marster Charles Street—he is de one what name me.

Yas'm, I wuz born de night he come home from college wif his dayplumeyer. He say he want to name me Vesta, fuh a woman he read 'bout in a book."

"Oh, yes, you were named for Vesta, the goddess of the home fire or hearthstone. You know it wuz Vesta's mission to guard the sacred fire on the altar of the home."

"Den dat wuz what de lady done? I ne'er did know why he admired de name so much. I wuz too little to ask many questions. Well, Miss, I am sho I always cornsidered my love fuh my husban' a sacred fire; but one time I wuz sore' tormented. After I wuz married de second time, I took a boarder named Thomas Thompson, an', Miss—I'm 'shamed to tell it—he imagined 'at he wuz in love wif me. Somehow befo' he said anythin' 'bout it to me I felt a fear in my heart 'at he wuz thinkin' too much 'bout me, but I wouldn't harbor de thought even to myse'f. I kep puttin' it from me. Well, one day, when he come late to dinner an' my husban' done went on back to his work, Thomas Thompson tole me 'at he love me, an' he say to me:

" 'If you'll go way away from heah an' marry me, I'll do all in my power to make you happy, an' I won't be cross to you lack Mr. Hunter is, neither.'

"I jes looked him straight in de eye wifout so much as de quiver of a eyelid, an' I say to him: " 'Thomas Thompson, I is a se'f-respectin' married woman, an' I hope you wants to be a se'f-respectin' man, an' you musn't ever, long as you

live, broach dat subject to me agin, or you'll have to change yo' boardin'-house. A man is on de downward road to perdition whene'er he fuhgits hisse'f so fuh as to imagine 'at he is in love wif a yuther man's wife.' An', Miss, he jes quailed under my look. An' I say to him: 'As fuh my husban' bein' cross to me, I know 'at a man sometimes makes his home his wailin' place, as de Scripture says, an' ev'ry woman 'at has had a husban' knows 'at de male sect is very strainin' on grace; but a good wife onderstan's her own husban' an' knows how to make 'lowances fuh his shortcomin's.'

"Thomas boarded with me three months after dat an' he ne'er did broach dat subject to me no mo'. I ne'er did tell my husban' nothin' 'tall 'bout it; 'cause I knowd 'at no good woman don't need to git her husban' in trouble protectin' her 'ginst any yuther man.

"An' as fuh my husban' bein' cross to me, he wuz a ole batch'ler, an' ev'ry body knows 'at ole batch'lers is turble obstroperous an' hard-haided, 'cause dey done been let run loose so long 'at dey can't git use to bein' haltered up. Dey is worse en dem wile Texas ponies. Endeed dey is, Miss. Dey is reg'lar mustan's. Now, wif widderwers it's diff'ent. Dey is bridle-wise. Dey is done been haltered up, an' somehow dey jes can't, not to save dey souls, git use to runnin' 'roun' loose. Why, widderwers is so gentle an' bridle-wise 'at dey will come up an' mos' take de bit, whether you want 'em to er not.

"Now, I had a widderwer beau same time at

Mr. Hunter wuz comin' to see me, an' he wuz a plum daystracted fool 'bout me. His name wuz Charley. But, Lawd, Charley wuz too anxious! He look lack a sick kitten ev'ry time he see me. Why, I couldn't do my washin' fuh him. Hot days in summer, when I'd be washin' hard as I could in de back yard, I'd heah somebody sayin', 'Mornin'! What's de good word wif you?' An' dare he'd be wif a sack of candy er oranges, pokin' 'em fruh de palin's to me. Lawd, but he wuz werrysome! An' one hot day, when I wuz mos' daid over de ironin' table, heah comes Jonny Buckner to tell me 'at Charley wuz sick an' done sent fuh me; an' I have to put on my sunbonnet an' walk half a mile to see dat nigger! An' dare he lay in de bed, an' Sister Scrutchfiel' wuz a-fannin' him. I say to him:

"'Good mornin' Mr. Walker. I'se sorry 'at you is sick, but I don't know what I kin do fuh you. What seems to be de matter wif you? Is you done sen' fuh de doctor?"

"He wall his eyes 'roun' at me an' look faint lack, an' say:

"'I's sick in de heart! I's heart-sick!'—making me feel cheap talkin' lack dat 'fore Sister Scrutchfiel'! I say:

"'I ne'er is heyard of you havin' no heart trouble. Is you done sen' fuh de doctor?' An' wif dat he jes look at me pitterful a minnit, an' den turn his haid away an groan. Course, I know well nough what dat heart trouble wuz; but I ne'er let on, fuh I wuz mad. Sendin' fuh me to quit my work an' walk a half a mile in de

brilin' hot sun to talk 'bout his heart! Why, dat wuz worse en pokin' oranges fruh de palin's early in de mornin', fuh I could er et dem oranges when I set down to res' myse'f.

"Now, dat is a sample of widderwers' actions! Mr. Hunter, he wuz a batch'ler; an' when he'd see me he ten' lack 'at he didn't, an' walk 'long wif his haid in de air. Oh, dey have sich a way of 'tendin' 'at dey don't see you, an' try to look so satisfied wif deyse'ves an' so endependent 'bout de whole worl'. But dey is seein' an' thinkin', too—lots mo' en dey lets on! To tell de trouf, Miss, batch'lers is got sich a way of scannin' de ladies from de corner of dey eyes 'at dey jes can't he'p it. Mr. Hunter couldn't git ahaid of me bein' endependent, an' it wuzn't long 'fore I have him a-goin' some. But lots of times after I done marry him, I use to say to myse'f, 'Well, you sho is took a hard job on yo' han's tryin' to break in a batch'ler.' Why, sometimes it used to seem to me 'at I might jes as well whistle to de win' as to try to make him change his min'. An' lots of times after Charley done marry a pretty brown-skin gal named Lilly, an' look lack he never could do 'nough fuh her, I has thought 'at I wuz a fool to ever try to break in a batch'ler; fuh dey is so quare an' critical."

"I never will fuhgit de fuss time I saw my second husban'," she went on, with a musing, far-away look in her eyes. "He wuz walkin' 'long de street wif his soljur close on, an' his appelles an' his bayonet wuz a-shinin', an' he wuz walkin' so high-haided, an' his manners an' dey-

meanyers wuz so genteel. I wuz ve'y straightened an' in need of money, an' I had a gol' ring 'at a white lady give me fuh a keepsake. I hated to think of partin' wif it, but I needed de money. I wuz standin' in my doorway when he come 'long, an' I knowd de soljurs had been paid off—I knowd he have money—so I curchied an' say to him:

“‘Sir, would you lack to buy a nice gol' ring?’

“‘He bow, an' lift his hat an' step up beside me, an' say:

“‘I don't know, Miss—he didn't know I wuz a widder—‘let me see it, please,’ an' he look at it an' say, ‘How much do you charge me fuh it?’

“‘I tole him ‘at I didn't know how much it wuz worth, but it seem to me it ought to be worth eight dollars. Den he took out de money an' pay me fuh it. After dat ef he didn't pass by my house every single day of de worl'. Why, it jes seem to me ‘at I couldn't look out, but I'd see his appelles an' bayonet sparklin' in de sunlight in front of my house! But, co'se, I didn't let on. I act jes as oncornserned as ef he wuzn't dare. An' he act oncornserned, too; but I could tell ‘at he wuz scannin' me from de corners of his eyes. Yas'm,” continued Aunt Vesta, laughing, “I sol' him de ring, but I got it back agin. It wuzn't many weeks tell he made me a present of dat ring.

“‘Well, I do 'clare 'fore goodness ef I aint done talk Ethey mos' to sleep. Well, it's de fuss time I e'er did see dat chile git sleepy when anybody wuz talkin' in yeah-shot of her. An' ef dare aint de twelve-o'clock whistle blowin', an' dem white gent'men will be comin' to dey dinners.

Dey'll think 'at I has mighty little to do to be settin' up in heah talkin' to you.

"Miss, dem late chickens is good fryin' size now, an' I thought maybe 'at you might lack to git 'em today. Dis ole snow is so deep dey might git dey feet froze off. Dey is ole-time chickens, Miss. Dey isn't none of yo' encubatin' chickens. Dey is so much better en encubatin' chickens, you know; dey has so much mo' substance to 'em. Well, it's stan's to reason 'at anythin' what comes dey way Gawd entended is better. To tell de trouf, I has no use fuh new-fangled notions. When de street-fair wuz heah, a young white gent'man say to me:

"'Auntie, which you ruther ride in, de auter-mobile er de balloon?' I say to him:

"'Neither, ef you please, sir; 'cause when I die, I wants to die in de bed—I doesn't want to die on de roadside er up in de air.'"

"Well, I'll take the chickens whenever you bring them up," said Mrs. Gilmore.

"I done brung 'em. Dey is in de kitchen. I thought to myse'f I'd bring 'em, an' ef you don't want 'em, I kin pack 'em back home, ruther en run any rist of havin' to come right back agin in dis ole snow; fuh I hasn't got nobody to walk 'long befo' me an' tromp down de snow lack Sis' Tuncil use to have. Miss, did you ever know a colored person wif a better husban' en po' Sis' Tuncil use to have? Don't you recollect' how he use to go 'long in front of her, trompin' down de snow, an' how she used to come 'long behin' him, holdin' up her dress so finicky an' steppin' so

keerful in his tracks? I tole Jim Johnson 'at Sis' Tuncil have sich a good kin' husban', an' he wait on her so good, is why she grieve so fuh him when he is gone. An' Jim say 'at he wuzn't goin' to wear his life out waitin' on no woman jes' to be sho 'at she would grieve when he die. He say he'd lots ruther live an' be oncertain 'bout it. He is one 'sassy' imp'dent nigger as God ever did let live—actyully sets up Sundays an' plays de fiddle—not hymns, neither, but Satan's own tunes. He tole Nancy Buckner yuther day 'at he could git 'long wif anybody, an' dat's why he aint got no dread of torment. But she tole him 'at he'd fin' 'at Satan wuzn't so easy sof'-soaped as people.

"Miss, did you know 'at Nancy Buckner done driv' off Ned Thompson? You know, dey married at las'. Yas'm, he been stayin' wif her fuh a long while; but somehow he never did seem to be ready to git de cer'mony said over them. Well, one day, week befo' las', he tole her 'at she could repair de weddin' supper an' envite in de neighbors, an' he'd bring in de preacher an' dey'd git de cer'mony said over them. Well, when de table wuz set an' de supper ready, an' de preacher an' de company all in de house, dare wuz Ned wifout de license, an' no money to pay de preacher. Nancy wuz so mad 'at she took her umbrella, an' licketty-brindle down it come on his haid an' broke half in two. Course, when thin's done went so fuh, she hated not to have de weddin'; so she took him up to de cou't-house an' got de license, an' loan him de money to pay de



preacher, an' dey wuz married; but she driv him off 'fore de week wuz out. She say 'at dat nigger wuz jes as good fuh nothin' 'bout ev'rythin' else as he wuz 'bout marryin'. She say 'at he never did bring her in a cent of money, an' always have a good apertite. Well, I sho mus' go, Miss. Did you want to see de chickens 'fore you pay me fuh 'em?

"Thank you, ma'm," as she tied the money paid her for the chickens in the corner of her pocket-handkerchief. "I'll have some fraish aiggs fuh yo' Christmas cakes, an' I kin come any time you needs me to he'p git ready de engregents. I know it aint no small job to seed fo' er five pounds of reasons an' pick out a peck of nuts. Did you promise ole Santa Claus 'at you'd he'p him wif his Christmas candy dis Christmas?"

When the day had been set for cake and candy-making, Aunt Vesta bade Mrs. Gilmore 'Good mornin', and left the room, with Ethey at her heels.

"I'll tell you, honey, you mus' walk mighty straight an' be mighty perlite to ev'rybody, fuh dese is Santa Claus' times. In dese times he listens at de key-hole an' heahs ev'ry word 'at's spoke. An' don't you let yo' cur'osity git you in no trouble. Lots of times you'll heah paper rattlin'—tissue paper, too—but don't you let on. An' always tap at Miss' do'. Don't go blurtin' in dare, whate'er you does, 'specially ef you heahs any sort of commotion goin' on. An' whatever you does, honey, don't peep in no boxes an' pack-ages you happen to see layin' 'roun'; 'cause I's

always heyard 'at dey is nothin' makes ole Santa half as mad as fuh little chillun to be meddlesome Matties—he hates a meddlesome Mattie worser en any yuther kin'er chile."

"No'm, you kin trus' yo' sweet life I isn't goin' to git cot in no trap lack dat in dese Christmas times. I already done saw de shape of almon's in a paper sack, an' done smelt reasons an' figs, too; but I didn't lay de weight of my hand on nothin'."

"Dat's right, honey, but it would be better fuh you not to see er smell neither in Christmas times—don't use none of yo' orgins, an' you'll be so much mo' 'stonished when Christmas mornin' comes."

"Set down an' res' yo'se'f a while, won't you, Sis' Hunter," said Ethey, as they entered the kitchen. "Miss will be sho to want you to eat some hot dinner 'fore you goes out in dis ole snow, an'," she continued, as Aunt Vesta took the offered chair, "I wants to tell you I intends to be jes as good as I kin be in dese times, 'cause I's as skeerd of ole Santa as ef he wuz a speret. Why, it's de Lawd's truf, Sis' Hunter, I's 'fraid to think sin in my heart. Why, jes yistiddy, when ole Aunt Susannah pass by heah an' turn dem wall eyes at me, an' work her mouth lack she wuz jawin' at me, I wouldn't let myse'f even think in my heart how mean she wuz, but I jes says out loud:

" 'Dat ole lady sho kin walk spry, ef she can't do nothin' else.' "

"Dat's right, honey, don't let Aunt Susannah's

quare actions werry you." Then, turning to Malinda, Aunt Vesta continued: "Oh, but I can't he'p laughin' at ole Aunt Susannah. She do do sich out-dacious thin's. Do you know, she got mad at de church committee 'cause dey asked her fuh money to pay fuh de chandlelier dey broke endurin' de pertracted meetin'? Yas, ended, she got turble mad, an' she say:

"No, I aint goin' to give you nothin' fuh dat chandlelier. You niggers done shout dat chandlelier *down* an' you kin jes shout it *up* again. I don't see no need of tryin' to kick de sky 'cause you's got religion.' Den she have de imp'dence to go to love-feast, an' when de bretherin an' sisterin go 'roun' shakin' han's wif each other, to show dey good feelin', she stan' up in de aisle an' glare at 'em wif her arms folded, an' won't shake han's wif nobody. She say she goes to love-feast jes to show dem niggers how she hates 'em."

"Uh-uh! But Aunt Susannah is one er dem onlies' niggers!" said Malinda, laughing.

"I wonder what kin be ole Santa's min' on de subjec' of Aunt Susannah?" said Ethey, who found it hard to get off the subject of Santa Claus. "Oh, but dey sho is somethin' mighty good an' myster'ous 'bout him. Now, what yuther grown man would put hisse'f out goin' 'roun', slidin' down chimbleys, jes to susprise little chillun an' make 'em happy? An' what kin keep dat ole gent'man from sneezin' his haid off when he snuff all dat soot an' ashes? An', Sis' Hunter, don't you reckon dat ole gent'man mus' travel in his

sky-carr'age part of de time, when de snow-drif's is so deep? I know he kin, ef he wants to. But, let me tell you right heah, I isn't goin' to meddle myse'f 'bout how dat ole gent'man travels, 'cause he kin travel to suit hisse'f.

"Dare goes dat Pete to de barn. But, oh, Sis' Hunter, he is one of de torments of my soul! Do you think 'at ole Santa is goin' to hol' it 'ginst me ef I do sometimes fly off de handle at him? I do wish 'at me an' Miss an' Eli didn't haf to be 'pendent on him fuh nothin'. I can't keep no peaceful, happy thoughts in my min' when he's aroun'. Talk about strainin' yo' grace—why he werries de life out of me! An' when I tries to be perlite to him, an' tell him what good manners is, he can't—not to save his soul—learn nothin'. Yuther day, when I envite him to my doll's birthday dinner, he ne'er have de perliteness to bring her a present. An' he wuzn't satisfied wif dat; when he set down to de table, he drunk all de tea out of de teapot at one mouthful, an' mos' swaller my doll's birthday cake whole. Now, Sis' Hunter, don't you know 'at de angels in heaven couldn't think poetry when dey have sich actions goin' on 'roun' 'em."

"Don't you worry 'bout dat, honey. Ole Santa knows 'at Pete is yo' thorn in de flesh."

## CHAPTER XII

Aunt Vesta had come, according to promise, to help prepare the ingredients for the Christmas cakes and candies. She and Malinda were at one window, seeding raisins, while Mrs. Gilmore and Ethey were at another, cracking and picking out the nuts. The ground was still covered with snow, but the kitchen was snug and warm, and Aunt Vesta and Malinda were in their happiest mood.

"But we'll have to git a move on us, Sis' Mowin, ef we gits ready fuh ole Santa by hangin'-up-stockin' time. Dat ole gent'man needs lots of help dese days. 'Cause de worl' done generate so fas', an' he got so many little chillun to give to, is why we has to make de cakes an' candies. Co'se, when he fuss undertook de job dey wuzn't but ve'y few chillun in de worl'; now 'at de air is swarmin' wif 'em, he has to call fuh he'p, 'specially sense he aint as young as he use to be an' can't git 'roun' so lively."

"Dat ole gent'man mus' be gittin' on in years, aint he, Sis' Hunter?" asked Malinda, with a sly glance at Ethey. "I been hearin' 'bout him all my lifetime, an' my mother an' my gran'mother say folks been callin' him ole Santa ever sense dey kin recollect'."

"Why," said Aunt Vesta, "he mus' be as old as de flood! No, I reckon' he wuzn't generated

in de time of de flood, but he must er been generated mighty soon after. He wuz heah in George Washington's times, I know."

"Lawdee, Miss," said Ethey, "aint Santa Claus times myster'us an' ser'us, as ole Aunt Maranda say. Would you b'lieve it, ef sperets an' haints wuz walkin' 'roun' in dis house I couldn't, not to save my soul, feel no quarer en I do. Good an' kin' as dat ole gent'man mus' be, I can't he'p from squirmin', to think of him comin' in de night-times, when ev'rybody is fast asleep, an' tiptoin' 'round in dis house unbeknownst to us. But, co'se, nobody needn't feel oneasy when he is 'round; fuh I'll bet ole Santa is perlite, an' got good behavior an' good manners, an' good raisin', too, an' I intends to patern myse'f after him, too. But," shivering and crossing her hands on her breast, "jes think of anybody tiptoin' an' creenin' dey necks at you when you is fas' asleep! Why, it's so much lack sperets! Dey kin come in through de keyhole when de do' is locked, an' dey kin even pass through solid walls. I don't b'lieve, ef it wuz to save my soul from torment, I ever could feel well enough 'quainted wif sperets to make 'em welcome in my house. No'm, not ef I knowd 'at it wuz my ole gran'papa done come back to spin me some of his long yarns. No, ma'm, ended! Why, de ve'y fac' 'at he wuz a speret would be 'nough fuh me! Why don't dey stay up in heaven, where dey b'longs, I'd lack to know? Ef dey knows a good thin' when dey sees it, what in de name of goodness kin make 'em float out of heaven an' drif' down on dis lowlan'

soil of sin an' sorrow, makin' people mos' drap daid at de ve'y thought of 'em?"

"Why, honey," said Aunt Vesta, "I has heyard 'at it's 'cause dey has torments an' werryments of min'. Dey knows somethin' dey wants to tell, is why dey roams 'roun' down heah makin' signs to people."

"Open de do', Ethey, fuh Sis' Washin'ton," said Malinda. "I see her comin' up de carr'age way."

"Endeed I will," said Ethey, in great glee, "an', Miss, sperets al'ays gits a move on 'em when Sis' Washin'ton is 'roun. She wuz born wif a veil over her face, you know."

"Well, well, well! Good mornin'. Good mornin', an' Christmas gif' to you all!" said Silvey (Sister Washington) as she gave a low bow to each occupant of the kitchen. "Dis is mo' Christmas en I have saw anywheres, although dis big ole snow done sent people flyin' mighty lively 'roun' de Square, lookin' at toys an' picture-books."

"Well, de truth is," said Aunt Vesta, "de worl' done generate so fas', an' chillun done got so plentiful, ole Santa would wear hisse'f to a skeleton ef de fathers an' mothers an' friends of little chillun didn't go 'round to de sto's an' leave de number of de house an' de number of chillun at each place, so he kin have some idee of what's expected of him. Miss say ole Santa's wife tole somebody 'at de ole gent'man mos' have nervis prosperity las' Christmas, 'cause de chillun writ him so many letters, an' dey put off writin' tell he

got sich a big mail all at once-t, an', co'se, he didn't want nobody disapp'inted, so he mos' broke his neck readin' all dem letters. I leaves a stand-in' order wif him from one Christmas to another; perfumery (white rose), nice han'kerchiefs, an' some pretty odd piece of china fuh my table," said Aunt Vesta, nodding at Mrs. Gilmore.

"Set right down heah Sis' Washin'ton," said Malinda, giving her a chair near the stove. "Miss will welcome you same as me an' Sister Hunter, 'cause times is rushin' us, an' she know how glib yo' tongue kin fly when yo' han's is busy. You see, we is in de midst of thin's. Heah, let me pin dis ap'on 'round you to save yo' Sunday dress, while you cut de citron, please, ma'm," said Malinda, giving a low bow and a salute when she had finished. "Don't you begin to feel Christmas in yo' bones, Sis' Washin'ton? Why, even de hens on dis place is cacklin' so lively 'at we know aiggs will be plenterful, an' dey's no need of aigg-nog bein' skeerce," smacking her mouth and winking both eyes.

"Why," said Silvey, "would you b'lieve it, Sis' Mowin, I feels Christmas so in my bones 'at I kin almos' tas'e aigg-nog now. Give me a plate an' a sharp knife. We kin soon git thin's in shape, 'specially ef I'm 'lowed to mix a little cornversation wif de engregents of dis Christmas cake. An' even Ethey is helpin'—bless her little soul!"

"Yas, indeed," said Aunt Vesta, "but don't I know what I'd been doin' now, ef I wuz little an' back in Fuhginia!"



"What, Sis' Hunter?" said Ethey, quickly. "Eatin' candy an' cake, an' dancin' 'Yankee Doodle,' I'll bet!"

"No, honey! Me an' Rose would be rubbin' up de brass candlesticks. Lawdee, but don't I recollect' how we use to rub an' burnis' up dem candlesticks! Den, when we'd take 'em in de house to show 'em to Miss Fannie, she'd look at 'em sideways an' ev'ry yuther way, an' den pint out a little speck, an' say to us:

"'No, can't you see dat tarnis'? Go, now, an' don't come back tell you have ev'ry spot on dem candlesticks shinin'."

"Den, ef me an' Rose feel our little ole fingers wuz tired, an' take 'em back de secon' time wif a spot on 'em, we'd git our jaws slapped. But Miss Fannie wouldn't do it! No, ended! She'd make her maid do it, 'cause dat slappin' would make her han's smart an' hurt—an' wuzn't Furginia people 'fraid of a little hurtin'! She'd say: 'Tulip, do you see dat speck on de candlestick? Slap dey jaws.' An' when Tulip done slap us enough, she'd say: 'Dat will do, Tulip.'"

"An' after all dat slappin', Sis' Hunter still wishes herself back in Furginia, in slave-times!" said Malinda.

"No," said Aunt Vesta, "I don't want to be a slave agin. Freedom is sweet, but sometimes lonesome. No, I wants ev'rybody to have dey liberty an' privilege; but, co'se, in slave times in many ways we could be ve'y keer-free, 'cause ole Marster foot all de bills, an' we knowd, come rain

er come shine, we'd be provided fuh. We ne'er did have no bad luck tell po' dear ole Marster died."

"We were just discussing spirits when you came in, Silvey," said Mrs. Gilmore. "Aunt Vesta says they come back to earth only when something troubles their minds."

"Ya'sm, I has al'ays heyard so. Now, you all heyard 'bout ole Uncle Lew Brown's speret 'at haints Arrow Rock?"

"Why, no'm," said Ethey, going up to Silvey, as though the question had been addressed to her.

"I done heyard *some* talk, but not *all*, I'm sho," said Malinda.

"He wuz a very quare ole man even in life, you know," continued Silvey. "All de colored people wuz skeerd of him livin', an', co'se, dey'd be skeerd of him daid. He wuz so quare fuh a colored person, settin' 'roun' silent an' speechless, never speakin' a word to nobody 'at he could possibly git out of. Now, dey say his speret haints his cabin, an' sets silent on de do'-step wif haid bowed down jes lack he use to in life. Dey say Lige Tyson mos' give up his own ghost one dark, drizzly night as he wuz passin' de place. Dey say Lige looked up, an' dare wuz Uncle Lew, as usual, settin' on de do'-step wif haid bowed. An' when Lige got in front of him, he ris an' beckon Lige wif his han'—so—an' Lige say 'at 'gainst his will he followed de speret, an' 'at it walked back'-ards, heah an' dare, 'roun' an' 'roun', beck'nin him wif his han'—so—all de time tell he come to a big white oak tree—an' he stop still an' pint

down'ards, an' banish lack a mist ascendin' to heaven. People say 'at de ole man know 'bout gol' bein' burried dare, an' it so torments his speret tell he can't res' in heaven, 'cause he ne'er tol' nobody 'bout it while he live, an' it might do so much good in de worl'. An', dey say 'at ef Lige hadn't been sich a tornation fool, an' had of thought to mark de side of de tree, or stuck a stick in de groun' where de speret pint, he could er went back an' foun' de place; but, 'stead of dat, Lige tuck to his heels an' run lack de witches wuz after him. An' in daytimes, when he would lack to know where in de name of goodness is dat tree, he can't fin' it, 'cause dey's so many white oak trees dare so much alike."

"My good kin' mercerful Savior, Miss," said Ethey, "I's done wif Arrow Rock, an' I don't want to n-e-v-e-r see dat ole ram-shacklin' town!"

"But, chile, Uncle Lige's speret aint a circumstance to dat haidless monster 'at rides a white horse an' haints dat town."

"Dat what?" said Malinda and Ethey, in a breath.

"Dat haidless monster," said Silvey. "Why, it's a great big monster man wifout a haid, 'at rides a white horse an' roams dat town. An' would you b'lieve it, dey say one time dey wuz a white man 'at had been stayin' in town too late an' drinkin' too long, tell when he went on home feelin' lively an' singin' a gay song, while he wuz eatin his braid an' cheese, he met de phantom in de big road, an' de phantom didn't do nothin' but grab dat white man's braid an' cheese 'way from

him an' go on 'bout his business. An' folks do say 'at dat's one good deed 'at a haint is been knowd to do, fuh ef it didn't mos' skeer de life out of de white man, an' 'at it sober him so 'at he never, from dat day to dis, is been known to take a yuther drink of whiskey. An' dey say 'at he paid off de morguage on his farm, an' 'at he's rich now an' have money in de bank.

"But, Lawdee, we doesn't have to go to Arrow Rock to fin' haints. Ev'rybody say 'at Eas' Marshall is hainted, an' 'at jes' back of heah haints hops 'roun' lively wif dey haid off ev'ry night 'bout midnight. My ole man is ve'y 'fraid of Eas' Marshall haints. He say he court his fuss wife in Eas' Marshall, an' 'at when he'd go to see her he'd al'ays stay all night, 'cause he wuz too skeerd of haints to go home in de night-times. But," said Silvey growing reminiscent, "de wors' skeerd I ever wuz of haints wuz when I wuz a seeker. You know, I wuz born wif a veil over my face, an' anybody 'at's born wif a veil over dey face kin jes' expect to see haints all dey life-time. But, as I wuz sayin', de time when I felt shaky in my knees wuz when I wuz a seeker. I never will fuhgit it ef I lives tell de jedgment day. I had been a seeker fuh six weeks of de pertracted meetin, an' I seem to git furrer an' furrer from de reconcillation of de speret. An' it did seem I done been give de comman' to dapart into outer darkness. Even de saints of de church done got out of patience wif me, an' seem to regard me wif a strange an' onearthly glance whenever I approach de mourners' bench. To tell de trouf, I

done commensted to feel shamefaced in de sight of Christians, an' my ole Aunt Cindy done tole her daughter Mary 'at ef she went up to dat mourners bench an' come back home to her wifout religion, she wuz goin' to whup her, sho. So, you see, I wuz put to it. De church members, er most of 'em, done make up dey min's 'at I done commit de onpardonable sin.

"Well, one night dey done sung de las' song, an' done pronounce de benediction, an' I fin's myse'f at home an' in bed an' no sign of de reconcillation of de speret. My standin' in de community wuz a totterin', an' I could see it. I wuz sore tormented. I done ask fuh de reconcillation of de speret, an' Gawd done hid de light of His countenance fuh from me. Why, I wuz a hundred times worse off en ef I hadn't never ask fuh it. Dem church members done make up dey min's 'at I wuz not only a sinner, but outside de pailin's of grace. De six weeks' meetin' wuz advancin' to a close, an' I wuz wifout hope. De church members been exortin' me to give up de sin I hel', lack a sweet morsel under my tongue, an' lay hold on de cross. An' dey prayed loud an' long 'at Gawd would stretch de heavenly cable cleer down where de sinner in de lowes' gutter could reach it, same as de person on de mountain top. All dat show me what dey thunk of me.

"Well, dat night, as I say, I done put out de light an' done went to bed; but it did seem 'at de ve'y blackness of night done settle on my soul. All sudently, as I lay on my bed, a voice spoke up to me an' say:

"'Git up, an' set down sideways on my shoulder, an' come wif me.'

"I look up, an' dare stan' a young man wif a flamin' countenance. De minnit I heah de soun' of dat voice, I thunk of Dan—Dan wuz a young colored man 'at had died 'bout three months befo'. I did so want to see him befo' he died, but I didn't even git to go to his fune'al. Gawd done put henderensis in my way to keep me from it. Some people did say it wuz 'cause I had treated Dan mean an' wouldn't marry him. Well, Dan did seem ve'y oneasy in his min' 'bout me, an', lack mos' gals in dem days, I wuz skittish an' shy 'roun' him, an' look de yuther way, 'cause his onuseyal actions in company did make me feel often times shamefaced, an' while I lacked him, I couldn't he'p from ignorin' him in company.

"Well, when dis man wif de flamin' countenance say to me de second time, *firm an' strong*, 'Git up an' set down sideways on my shoulder,' I felt 'at it mus' be one of de requirements of de speret befo' I could git de reconcillation; so I done as he tole me, an' in a minnit it did seem 'at we wuz out of dat house an' wafted in de air. We flew on an' on over de tops of de houses, an' sometimes it seem 'at we would pierce de sky. I soon foun' 'at we wuz haided for Salt Pon' neighborhood. We went on an' on, an' I could reco'nize ev'ry spot where I done been wif Dan—Kiser's bridge, where I went to a picknick, where I done try myse'f wif my oncornernment 'bout Dan—de big grove camp groun', where Dan got religion, an' beg me so hard to be reconciled to

him an' Gawd—an' on over Mrs. Harper's cow pen, where I wuz milkin' when Dan lean on de fence an' make known to me fuh de fuss time his true an' inward feelin's fuh me. We pass over de graves where two war-time soljurs wuz buried—an' on—an' on—an' while I wuz in de air, we could mos' touch de stars. All de scenes of earth wuz in plain view. After a while dare looms up to my earthly vision cedar trees, an' tombstones, an' befo' I could draw my breath we lights down in a graveyard. An' dare, by a open grave, he say to me:

"Git down, an' go kiss Dan."

"I went an' descended down into de open grave, an' dare wuz Dan, jes as natchul as life. I done as he tole me, an' de minnit I kissed him, all de sins 'at Dan ever did commit come an' settled right in my throat! Den a voice from heaven say:

"De gift of Gawd is return alive.' An' as I come up out of de grave, de young man say to me: 'Set down sideways on my shoulder an' come.'

"We went back over de same groun' as we come. We pass over de same hills an' fiel's, de same two soljurs' graves, Mrs. Harper's cow pen—I could even heah de little calves bleatin' fuh dey mammies, an' a fuh-off rooster seem to be crowin' fuh day—an' jes as a faint streak of red light shine out in de east, he took me in through de open winder an' laid me on de bed. Den he walk back'ards to de winder an' stop. A filmy veil seem to cover my sight a minnit. Den I look—an' dare, beside my bed, stan's a low,

hunchback black man 'at hardly come to my elbow. I knowd it wuz de tempter, sent to tempt me an' try my faith; but I done passed through so much, 'at I wuz datermined not to turn back.

"I got up to go 'bout my work, an' ev'ry step I take dat little black imp of Satan followed me. Sometimes out of de corners of my eyes I could see him beckon me wif his han' an' motion me to stop. But no! I never let on 'at I saw him. Ofttimes my feet wuz heavy, an' sometimes it seem 'at dey wuz mirey clay in my pathway an' hel' my feet. Footsore an' werry, I went on fuh three long days an' nights—never fuh one minnit did I git rid of de tempter! He followed me 'bout my work, an' even to church; set by me through de serment; stood by me at de mourners' bench; but, co'se, he wuzn't viserble to de congregation. De third night I rasseled all night long wif de speret, an' jes as day wuz a breakin', de young man wif de flamin' countenance come to my bedside an' say:

"'Take a bucket an' put it in de well, an' go ev'ry day to de well, an' de day you fin's water in de bucket, you may know 'at yo' sins is fuhgiven.' Den he 'proached de winder, walkin' backwards, an' jes as a red light burst in de east he raised his han's over his haid, an' his eyes seem to flash fire, an' he say:

"'See dat you tell no man.' An', soft an' gentle as a summer's breeze, he wuz wafted out of de winder, an' as de red light fell on his side face, I could recognize de ligaments of Dan. An' dat minnit de rooster crow fuh day. I got up an'



done as he tole me, an' de third mornin', as I went to de well, de bucket pop up out of de well wif nothin' pushin' or pullin' it, an' it wuz half full of water. Oh, but my good Lawd an' Marster up in heaven!" clapping her hands, "ef de reconciliation didn't come dat minnit! De mirey clay done been washed from my feet! De burden of sin done been dropped from my soul, an' I done put on de habilliments of righteousness! I wuz light on my feet as a feather; seem I done lost some of my cloze. I seem to jes be wafted 'roun' up in de air 'thout no motion of my own. De speret fell on me, an' I spoke as no man never heyard me befo'. I went from house to house tellin' de good news. De church members rallied to me, an' I shouted an' praised Gawd all dat mornin' long. Nobody done a lick of work an' de sun wuz high up in de ellerments befo' I recollect' 'at I aint et a mouthful of breakfas' dat day. When I went to church dat night, I couldn't hardly git up de church aisle fuh de embracements of de bretheren an' sisteren. An', would you b'lieve it er not, dat meetin', what done been give out to close dat night, continued fuh two weeks longer. An' people say yit 'at it wuz de grandes' revivalment of grace dat church ever did have!"

"Oh, but I know dat!" said Malinda, "I has heyard my mother-in-law say 'at so an' so hap-pen endurin' de revivalment when Silvey come through."

"Yas, Lawd! An' folks say yit 'at de personification of grace rest wif dat church fuh many a long day. Oh, but I sho wuz tried as by fire,"

said Silvey, with a groan. "I come up through firery trials, ef anybody ever did."

"But lookee, Miss," said Ethey in delight, as Silvey finished this very interesting experience, "ef dare don't come ole Aunt Tichey Ann! You know, she done been to de horsepital an' done had all her arteries cut out. Please, ma'm, make mama lead her conversation up to dat horsepital. She is so funny! She do talk so broadly an' cornfeldy. She sho is out-landish!"

When Tichy Ann had been welcomed and given a comfortable seat, Malinda very deftly referred to her improved state of health, and concluded by saying:

"Well, you sho is *one livin'* witness of what doctors kin do. Now, I hope dey didn't sew up no chisels an' files inside of you. Times must er been very treacherous wif you befo' you got through wif dat daysection—wuzn't dey, Sis' Yon-nell?"

"Dat's so! Dey sho wuz! But I put myse'f in de han's of de doctor, an' he tuck me to de horsepital. When we got in dat big hall I sho did feel pitterful, an' I say to Dr. Dwyer:

"'Wha 'bouts you gwine to take me to daysect me?"

"He say to me: 'Jes step in de aligater, Aunt Tichy Ann,' an' he pint at a little room 'bout de size of dat table, wif a barb-wire do' to it.

"I step in, an' he come in right after me—an' fore Gawd when dat little room ris up in de air, ef Gab'al had er been standin' to sides me, I couldn't er been worser skeerd. Den, when it

seems de thin' done mount de sky, it stop, an' I has a yuther quake; fuh heah comes a lot of white gent'men to greet me, wif long sleeve befo' de war-times schoolgirl white ap'ons on! I say to 'em:

"'You white gent'men sho is goin' to give me a deception, aint you?"

"Dey all laugh, an' I laugh, too. Why, I had to say somethin'. Ef I hadn't, I'd er drapt daid. But time dey give me dat stuff to smell I wuz off, an' I didn't know nothin' tell Dr. Dwyer tuck hold of my wris an' say:

"'You's all right now, Aunt Tichey Ann. All yo' arteries done been cut out, an' now you's gwine to git well."

"Oh, but you has mo' grit en me, Sis' Yonnell. I couldn't er submit to it—'sides payin' all dat money," said Malinda, shaking her head.

"What money? Fore Gawd, I didn't pay 'em a red cent. Dey didn't charge me a penny fuh it."

"Well," said Aunt Vesta, "I don't want nothin' cut out of me, even ef I could git it done fuh nothin'. Gawd put all dem thin's in me. I wuz born wif 'em in me, an' I expects to die wif 'em in me."

"Well, I wouldn't er min' stayin' jes lack Gawd made me, neither, an' I'd er kep' 'em all dare, too; but when de doctor tole me I couldn't live an' keep 'em dare, I make up my min' he could cut 'em out, 'cause I knowd one thin'—I'd ruther be livin' wifout 'em en daid wif 'em, even ef Gawd did put 'em dare," said Aunt Tichey Ann, with emphasis.

"Now you's talkin'!" exclaimed Malinda, doubling up after her usual fashion when greatly amused.

"De white lady what wait on me at de hospital say to me: 'You sho wuz a good subjec', an' you wuz brave, Mrs. Yonnell.' "

"Co'se you wuz brave!" said Malinda. "Ev'rybody know 'at nothin an' nobody can't 'timer-date you. Why, ef you wuz to meet ole Satan hisse'f in de big road, I do b'lieve on my soul you would double up yo' fis' an' try to knock him down. An' you have a white lady to wait on you up dare, did you, Sis' Yonnell? Well, times wuz goin' by contraries, wuzn't dey, 'bout dat time?" said Malinda, winking slyly at Mrs. Gilmore.

"Yas, Lawd!" said Aunt Tichey Ann, laughing. "An' I have a yuther quake when I sees dat dah white lady, way up dah so close to de sky, waitin' on me. I thinks to myse'f maybe dat wuz Gab'al in de aligator, an' maybe he done tuck me on up to heaven wif him."

"Well, I reckon yo' ole man must er been mighty glad to see you back from de troubled waters. He must er miss you a heep," said Malinda, cautiously.

"Oh, I don't know. He grunt a little louder en useyul; but he never say nothin'—only 'at nobody never cook him nothin' fitten to eat while I wuz gone. Men don't miss women when dey's away, lessen dey suffers some onconvenience. My ole man has ve'y few words. He never did have de gift of speech, only fuh de short time of court-

ship. He put in his time so well he aint hardly spoke to me sense—lost his voice soon as de ceremony wuz pronounce over us."

"Maybe he done exost de subjec', Sis' Yonnell. I reckon you didn't have to call him Mr. Few-words when he wuz tryin' to git you?"

"No, ended!" said Aunt Tichey Ann, laughing. "He could talk den, an' even tried to exercise his min' complimentin' me—tried to kiss me, an' tole me I remin' him of a butter ball—some-thin' he could eat, co'se. My ole man wuzn't lack yourn, Sis' Hunter. Min' didn't have no poetry in his soul. He couldn't tell me I wuz a rose-bud, bloomin' 'long his pathway. No, ended!" with a sigh. "Mine couldn't git his eyes off cabbage an' turnips long 'nough to see no rose-buds. I do know my ole man is de mos' cur'uses' person in dis worl', an' got de mos' cur'uses' ways. An' he gits worser an' worser," turning to Mrs. Gilmore, "ev'ry day of his life. I don't know what's goin' to become of de worl' ef somethin' aint done to quell de men. Why, jes' dis mornin' my stepdaughter wuz readin' me out of de paper whah a man on de yuther side of Miami beat his wife tell she die. Got tired of livin' wif her, I reckon! Got his eye on some yuther woman, I reckon! I tells my ole man ef he got his eye on any yuther woman, jes' keep it dah, an' it won't be long tell I'll be foot-loose; fuh de graveyard is plum full of ole men what got too gaily fuh dey own wives. I hardly kin live wif my ole man—he kits crabbiter an' crab-

biter ev'ry day of his life. Why, jes dis mornin', as we wuz drivin' 'long in de slop-wagon, I say to my ole man:

"Why don't you check up de horse's haid, so he will walk lack he's got some style 'bout him, 'stead of lagging 'long lack a stack of bones?' Den he say to me:

"Shet up! Fuss thin' you know you'll make me mad!' An' I say to him:

"Yas, an' fuss thin' you knows you'll fin' yo'-se'f layin' down dah on dat dah groun', too.' An' I say to him: 'Aint dis my wagin? Didn't I pay fuh dat harness?' He say:

"Yas you did. But didn't Gawd make man de haid of de woman?' An' I say:

"Yas, Gawd did—an' dat's right whah Gawd done wrong, too! "

"Dat's Scripture, whe'er it's in de Bible er not!" said Malinda, clapping her hands.

"Den he say to me:

"You done been ridin' in dem elegated cars tell you done got 'bove ridin' in de slop-wagin.' "

"Well," said Malinda, laughing, "I reckon dey wuz some truth as well as poetry in what de ole gent'man say 'bout de elegated cars—now wuzn't dey, Sis' Yonnell? You did feel high-haided an' uplifted—now didn't you?—ridin' up in de air over de tops of houses—now didn't you? Own up, ole lady."

"Well, now,—uplifted? Maybe I did, ridin' so high up in de air. But as fuh any high-haidedness, now, dat wuzn't me, fuh I clare 'fo Gawd I never did stop prayin' from de time I set myse'f

down in dem cars tell I put my foot on solid ground agin. Why, dey is de skeeries travellin' cornveyances I ever did tackle! Why, you feels so oncertain in 'em! Dey go lack de win'. Dey fairly lashes de air! Dey remin's me of a long blacksnake whip, an' I do know, on my soul, ef I had er been swingin' on de tail of a whip an' somebody high up in de air had er been flourishin' it over de tops of dem houses, I couldn't er felt no mo' oneasy in my min'. I cert'ny did pine fuh home an' my ole man's slop-wagin fuh once-t in my lifetime. My daughter wuz awful 'shamed of me fuh showin' how skeered I wuz; but I wuzn't 'shamed of bein' skeerd of nothin' as on-natchul as dat. No, you may bet yo' sweet life I jes sot dah an' prayed out loud. I say so ev'rybody in dem cars heah me:

"O Gawd, lan' me safe! O Gawd, lan' me safe!"

"A bal'-haid fat man 'cross from me shake his sides an' say: 'Is dis yo' fuss exper'ence, auntie?'"

"I say to him: 'Yas, sir, an' I pray to Gawd it will be my las', fuh I don't keer 'bout tryin' to fly tell I has wings!'"

"Ev'rybody in dem cars holler an' laugh, but I didn't smile. I seed nothin' to laugh 'bout, when I didn't know what minnit I'd be picked up wif a cracked skull. Why, I'd lots ruther dey'd go on an' dasect me an' be done wif it! Nannie's ole man wanted me to ride on de whale's back—said it wuz in de water on de lake, an' I could git on it an' go over to Milwaker—but I tell you now I never went nigh no whale's back."

"My Lawd!" said Silvey, venturing a remark for the first time since the entrance of Aunt Tichey Ann, "ef you saw so much in de city, no wonder yo' ole man wuz 'fraid you'd snurle up yo' nose at de slop-wagin."

"My ole man! Oh, shucks! He wuzn't 'fraid of nothin'. He jes want to be contrary. He jes want to have his way, an' keep me under. But he done foun' he can't do it ef you heahs my racket."

"Well," said Malinda, "he kep' his fuss wife under. I was heyard my mother-in-law say he 'timedate her. She say he wuz a earthquake to his fuss wife."

"Well, now, dat may be," said Aunt Tichey Ann, warming up to the subject. "Maybe he wuz a earthquake, an' he may be a earthquake now; but ef he is a earthquake, I's a cyclone, an' don't you fuhgit it; an' jes as fas' as de earthquake kin shake thin's up, de cyclone kin blow 'em away. *Yas, sir-re bob,*" with toss of her head, "dat is so! I never is heyard of no cyclone bein' skeerd of no earthquake. No, ended! I let's my ole man grunt out his wrath tell I gits tired; den I gits *my* dander up an' tells him it's time to stop. You see, Miss," said Tichy Ann, turning to Mrs. Gilmore, "de cyclone kin silence de rumblin' of de earthquake."

"Why, do you know de male sect de worl over is jes de same; dey'd stan' flat-footed on our necks ef we'd let 'em. Dey thinks dey mus' have de bes' of ev'rythin', an' *all de say so*. Now, wif de chickens in dis yard; de ole hen has to scratch



her toe-nails off fuh de little chickens to git 'nough to eat, while de ole rooster, wif his tail feathers flyin' in de air, is steppin' lack de Lawd of creation, wif a lot of hens at his heels what aint got no 'cumbrances; an' ef he do accidentally fin' a bug er a worm, he makes a turble racket; but befo' de ladies he is galantin kin turn 'roun', he done gobble it up his own se'f. Den he pint out to dem de grit an' de grabble, an' tell 'em to eat dat—'at its good fuh 'em—'at it makes aigg-shells!"

"Now, aint dat gospel truth!" said Malinda, beating her head against the back of her chair. "Lawd! Lawd! Sis' Yonnell, you'll be de death of us all yit!"

"Jes last Sunday," continued Tichey Ann, not waiting for the merriment to cease, "when de preacher read out of de Scripture, 'Dah'll be no marryin' er givin in mar'age up in heaven, I say right out loud, settin' up to sides my ole man, 'Thank Gawd!'"

"Lawd, but didn't we all heah you!" exclaimed Malinda. "Sis' Tuncil nudge me an' say, 'Won't you listen at Sister Yonnell!' an' ev'rybody—even de preacher—haf to laugh."

"Now, Miss, added Aunt Tichey Ann, "you has no idee how my ole man do wear on my patience. He is so crabbit! He won't laugh an' he won't cry. I don't, to save my soul, see why he goes to pertracted meetin'. Why, would you b'lieve it, when we is all shoutin' an' singin' 'Happy Day,' he sets dah an' looks lack he could bite a ten-penney nail in two."

"Brother Yonnell al'ays wuz dat way," said Malinda, in a conciliating voice. "My mother-in-law say he wuz dat way when his fuss wife live. It al'ays did make him mad to see anybody shout."

"An' him a b'lievin' Christian, wif his name writ high on de church book! said Aunt Tichey Ann, in disgust. "I done been livin' wif my ole man three long years, an' I clare 'fore Gawd he is jes as much a riddle to me today as he wuz de day I marry him. Men is all de same, I know, 'cause, aint I done had five? Yas, ma'm, ef I hasn't had tussles wif matrimonin, nobody on Gawd's earth has. I done dismiss fo' 'cumbrances, an' I'd dismiss dis one, ef I wuzn't 'fraid people would say I wuz hard to git 'long wif."

"An' some of 'em you have to go to de co'rt-house to dismiss—didn't you, Sis' Yonnell?" asked Malinda, innocently.

"Heaven wouldn't be heaven to me," continued Aunt Tichey Ann, ignoring Malinda,—“no'm, you kin jes 'scuse me from heaven ef I has to have a man tacked on to me up dah. I know dah is plenty of po' tired women in dis worl' hopes to go to heaven an' fin' a shady, pleasant spot whah dey kin set down an' res deysev'es, an' not even haf to look at no man through all 'ternity—I means married women, co'se—women what's been hitched up wif 'em, an' had to be wheelhorse, an' do all de pullin', while de man trots 'long to-sides 'em, wif loose trace-chains, tryin' to glimpse some yuther woman out of de corners of dey eyes. Co'se, now, dey maybe plenty of ole maids what aint got no knowledge of married life an' thinks

dey is missin' somethin'. Now, dey may have hopes 'at Gab'al is goin' to take 'em an' set 'em down to-sides some man what he is been savin' fuh 'em all dese years; but dey isn't de women what's been harnesssed up wif 'em, an' had to rassle wif dey wayward sperets, sho as you is born.

"But, Sis' Hunter," turning to Aunt Vesta, who had been quietly seeding raisins during the discourse on men and matrimony, "I hasn't saw you sense de big snow yuther day, when you wuz enjoyin' dat sleigh-ride wif Brother Anderson Brown."

"Now, sholy," said Malinda, "Sis' Hunter hasn't at las' concluded to accep' de 'tentions of Brother Brown! He has been castin' sheep's eyes at Sis' Hunter fuh many a long day."

"Now," said Aunt Vesta, apologetically, "I hasn't been to say sleigh-ridin' wif nobody. Ole Brother Brown jes happen to be goin' my way as he wuz goin' to Stringtown to carry dem white people's laundry, an', co'se, common perliteness would make him envite me to ride when he saw me plowin' through de snow, haided de same way as he wuz."

"Oh," said Aunt Tichey Ann, "but dem sleigh-bells did ring lively! Dey soun' lack weddin' bells when dey pass by Ca'line Smith's. We all run to de winders, an' you aughter saw ole Brother Brown rahed back lack he done swallowed a ramrod. We thought dey wuz elopin', sho."

"I saw you all at de winders wif yo' necks creened, an' ef I had er thought a minnit 'bout

de racket dem sleigh-bells would er made goin' up an' down dem Stringtown hills, I never would er step my foot in dat sleigh. Ole Brother Brown wuz so proud of dem prancin' horses he didn't know what to do wif hisse'f. He say to me:

"'Gaily horses makes de sleigh-bells ring mo' gaily.'

"I say to him: 'Yas, but I wish you had *dumb-bells* on yo' horses; 'cause I don't keer 'bout no sich a blast of trumpets when I goes out wif a man fuh de fuss time sense my husban's daid."

"Yas, an' he wuz turble glad to git her company fuh even dat short time. He tole Billy Davenport 'at Lady Vesta done rafuse his 'tentions a long time, but now, sense she let him pull her out of de snow-drif', he hopes she's give him a yuther chance, an' ef she do, he'll promise to have dumb-bells on his horses; but dey'll be nothin' dumb 'bout him. He say he's gwine to go straight to de p'int, an' he gwine to tell her he won't have no coquettin', 'cause he don't enten' fuh her to make no football out of his heart. He say dis is goin' to be a lucky yeah fuh ole men, cause Brother Jones done been so success ——"

"An' is ole Brother Jones sho 'nough married?" asked Malinda, in surprise.

"Yas," said Tichey Ann, "aint he done marry his ole befo'-de-war-times wife! Bless de Lawd, yas, an' done pocket all dat ole lady's back pension by dis time, I knows. Her husban' wuz a ole soljur, you know, an' jes 'fore he died he got I don't know how many thousan' dollars back pension; so when Brother Jones heyard 'at de

ole gent'man wuz daid, he up an' marries de ole lady. He's a long haided ole man. He gits a pension, you know, an', co'se, Sister Hunter, as he b'longs to de male sect, marryin' aint goin' to have no effec' on his pension. Brother Jones tole Brother Talton 'at de weddin' follow de ole gent'man's fun'al right close; but he say he tole her dat, bein's dey done been married to each yuther once-t befo', dey didn't have to waste no time in courtship; 'cause dey wuz better 'quainted en mos' people when dey marry."

"Uh-uh! But de 'scuses men kin make fuh dey actions!" said Silvey, shaking her head.

"Hi! How 'bout ole Sis' Nancy Morris?" said Malinda, "I thought Brother Jones wuz goin' to marry her."

"No, ended!" said Aunt Tichey Ann. "He use to have a room at her house, an' she say her ole man tole her, while he wuz sick, 'at ef he die he want her 'an Brother Jones to marry, an' 'at she tole Brother Jones. But," laughing and shaking her head, "co'se, Brother Jones didn't want no sich a free will offerin' as dat. An', 'sides, Sis' Morris is so big an' cumbersom, an' Brother Jones is very poatly his ownse'f; an', co'se, he wuz goin' to marry somebody slim. Brother Talton done saw de bride. He went to de weddin', an' he say she's rayal spry lookin', an' as lively in her actions as a young gal, an' jes as slim as a shoestring."

"Now won't dat be a slam on ole Sis' Morris!" said Malinda. "But did any of you heah dat fine prayer Brother Jones make las' quarterly

meetin? Oh, but it wuz a scorcher! He sho did go up an' mingle wif de stars fuh once-t, Sis' Hunter. I didnt know what make him feel so uplifted—I thought it was speret. He say:

“‘Lawd, make us bright an’ shinin’ lights in Thy kingdom. We don’t want to be little ole lightnin’-bugs, floatin’ ‘roun’ in de balmy summer breeze; but make us big, royal arch ‘lectric lights, hangin’ high an’ strong in de firmament of Thy sky, ready to battle wif de storms an’ blasts of winter weather.’

“‘Didn’t he have dat whole congeragation shout-in’! Why, even ole Brother Yonnell prick up his yeahs lack he have a half a min’ to say ‘Glory!’ Oh, but dat prayer! Well, it must er been de prospec’ of dat ole befo’-de-war-times wife work-in’ on his speret. But dat ole gent’man sho is long-haided; fuh he know, come winter er come summer, one of dese little slim women goin’ to do mo’ fuh him en one of dese big, fat onwealdy women.”

“‘An’ Sis’ Morris is turble unwealdy, aint she?’” said Silvey. “‘An’ it do seem to me ‘at she weigh mo’ now en she did when her husban’ live. You done have a fine revivalment of grace at yo’ church, didn’t you, Sis’ Yonnell? ‘Bout how many converts did you have?’”

“‘Well, I don’t know jes how many. To tell de trouf, I don’t git much enjoyment goin’ to church wif dem big crowds. Dem niggers done mos’ stomp down dat ole Afkin Meth’dis church. It’s de Lawd’s trouf, de shoutin’ of dem niggers done endanger dat church, tell de flo’ fairly

teeters wif you when you walk on it. Shoutin' is very hard on churches. We al'ays have ours to repair soon as a big meetin' is over. It's de trouf, dey always comes a-beggin' jes as soon as de big meetin' closes fuh money to repair de church.

"An' what do it all 'mount to? We has our big dceptions to welcome de new converts into de fol', but in two er three weeks whah is dey? Done cool off, an' slack back, an' no whah to be foun' when we rallies to pay de preacher. Now, I do git plum out er patience wif dem niggers fuh wearin' out our church shoutin' an' kervortin' an' den goin' away, leavin' us de debt to pay. Sometimes I can't hardly blame my ole man fuh gittin mad at pertracted meetin', 'cause he knows what all dat kickin' is costin'. He say Missouri niggers an' Kentucky niggers kin shout on ve'ry slight provercations. He say dey kin bow dey naiks an' prance mighty, too, when dey is out in comp'ny. But, Sis' Hunter," said Tichey Ann, laughing, "he say 'at Furginia niggers got better regerlations in dey min's. My ole man say 'at de wors' part 'bout dem big shouters is, dey is al'ays de poores' payers."

"Tildy Sanders got mad an' lef' yo' church, didn't she, Sis' Yonnell?" asked Malinda, cautiously.

"Yas, Tildy got mad an' jined de Baptists, 'cause we kep' her too long on de holdin' committee."

"The holding committee? What is that?" asked Mrs. Gilmore.

"Why," said Tichey Ann, "endurin' our big meetin', we always have two committees 'p'inted, called de 'shoutin' committee' an' 'holdin' committee.' De holdin' committee has to take keer of de shoutin' committee. Tildy got mad, 'cause she say she couldn't git no chance to shout her own se'f. An' she contends it's harder work bein' one of de holders en one of de shouters, 'sides bein' mo' dang'ous; fuh while you is tryin' to keep de shouters from hurtin' deyse'ves, dey'll like as not chug you in de side an' break a half a dozen ribs."

"But you had a great many daid mourners, didn't you, Sis' Yonnell?" asked Malinda.

"Yas, Lawd! But daid mourners has to be watched same as any yuther kin'; fuh dey isn't no tellin' when dey'll come to life an' beat dey brains out on de benches, er, maybe, crack yo' skull. I do hope 'at Gawd knows what quare humants colored people is an' makes 'lowances fuh 'em."

"Co'se Gawd do, Sis' Yonnell," said Aunt Vesta, "'cause dey is jes lack Gawd make 'em. Sometimes I thinks Gawd is in cahoots wif white people, an' don't try to emprove our nation; 'cause dey give white people so much mo' enjoyment bein' jes as dey is—gives 'em so much mo' to laugh at an' makes out-landish pictures of. I do wish you could see some of dem books Miss have. An' I do wish 'at you could see some of de pictures of colored people 'at our colored poet 'lows in his books. An' Miss is jes as bad 'bout laughin' 'bout dem pictures as anybody. Why,



de picture of a little colored boy wif a half a watermellion in his mouth kin make her mos' split her sides."

"Oh, let people laugh, Sis' Hunter," said Malinda; "fuh while white people is splittin' dey sides at colored people, we may see somethin' in white people to smile at, to say de leas'. 'Sides, ef people didn't have so much to laugh at, dey couldn't be so cheerful."

"Dat's so!" said Aunt Vesta, "an' I do b'lieve on my soul 'at cheerful, laughin' people will do lots to redeem dis worl' from sin an' sorrow. I tries to be cheerful, an' I kin talk mighty glib to Ethey 'bout not werryin' 'bout bein' black, an' 'bout how our friends is flowers bloomin' 'long our pathway, an' how we mus' talk kin', an' smile on 'em as we pass 'long through life. Now dat's how I kin *talk*, an' maybe next minnit my heart is full of regrets an' sorrow, an' I am waterin' dem same flower friends wif my tears—ef," she added after a pause, "I aint givin' 'em a piece of my min'. But I do try to turn from gloom to glory. I know ef we kin clam high enough in speret we kin al'ays fin' de blessin's of peace; but, yit an' still, I can't al'ays think of it at de right time. One thing I know—when de werryments of min' an' body fades out under a heaven 'at has no clouds, we'll den be free from sorrow. Mus' be 'at people needs trouble; seems dey can't git 'long wifout it."

"Lawd! Lawd!" looking through the window. "How dis lonesome winter weather do effec' me! It takes my min' back to Furginia so much of de

time. Why, I kin see my mother an' my ole gran'mammy—we al'ays did say gran'mammy back in Furginia—an' po' dear Miss Fannie jes as plain as ef dey stood befo' me dis minnit. An' my po' little onlies' brother—he wuz taken away by de sheriff! Dat wuz a sorrow 'at mos' driv my mother out of her min'," shaking her head gloomily at Ethey, who at the prospect of a talk about old Virginia had crossed the room and was standing in front of Aunt Vesta. "He wuz a little boy eight er nine years ole. He wuz mindin' de gap, an' de sheriff come an' tuck him off. He wuzn't even 'lowd to go to de house to tell my mother good-bye—an' him her onlies' little boy! I wonder where he is now. Po' chile, I'm 'fraid he's daid. He never did have no onkin' treatment, an' I'm 'fraid he's daid. But, yit an' still, I can't he'p lookin' fuh him. Yas, endeed, I never see a crowd of strangers but I looks fuh my brother—I b'lieve I'd know him ef I wuz to see him. I even looks 'mong de little boys playin' 'long de roadsides an' thinks of my little brother. I know dey can't be him, 'cause he mus' be growd up by dis time; but, yit an' still, I looks fuh him whenever I sees a crowd of little boys.

"No, he never did have no hard time at home. His task wuz to min' de gap—dat wuz de place, honey, where de bars wuz let down fuh de man to haul de poles through. He jes have to stay dare an' buil' corn-cob houses, while he kep' de sheep from passin' through. Yas, an' don't I recollect dat day! He tuck his little basket of corn-cobs

an' start off so happy to min' de gap, never think-in' but he'd come back to dinner. But, no!—dat wuz de las' glimpse we ever did have of po' little Caesar—dat wuz his name. He sent us word, 'Good-bye,' by de colored man 'at wuz hauling de poles. He said, 'Tell my mammy an' all good-bye,—'at I'm gone!' He b'long to Marse Sam; but po' Marse Sam wuzn't to blame fuh it. How come him to lose his slaves wuz, he went to keep sto' at Ellets, an' he credit out to ev'rybody, an' when de outcry come dey wouldn't pay him what dey owe him, an', co'se, his colored people have to go fuh de debt.

"I hope my mother is still livin', but ef she's daid I know she's in heaven, fuh she prayed a great deal. She use to wake me up in de night prayin' out loud fuh help to bear her cross. Ef I jes hadn't spent money so free in my young days, I might now be able to go back to Furginia an' see my mother, an' maybe my little brother, ef he is livin' an' done went back to Furginia. Why, do you know," said Aunt Vesta regretfully, "I spent forty dollars once-t in St. Louis jes fuh trash? Yas, honey, forty dollars my husban' give me out of his bounty money, 'sides eight dollars of my own. When spring comes I hope to git back to Furginia."

"Oh, Sis' Hunter," said Malinda, soothingly, "try to rest corntented heah, where you know people; everybody would be so strange to you back dare after all dese years."

"Not changin' de subjec'," said Silvey, "dare

goes Jim Johnson. Dem serments he listen to didn't work no merical on him, did dey, Sis' Hunter?"

"No, dey didn't," said Aunt Vesta. "I don't know what's goin' to become of dat nigger. You know how he talk to Sis' Tuncil? You know he went three times to pertracted meetin' an' set up an' listen to de serment, an' we all thought he might want his soul saved; so we sent Sis' Tuncil to exort him; but no, dat nigger wuz jes as sassy an' imp'dent as ever. He say to her:

"'No, I don't want none of you nigger's pretense. Why don't yo' religion stay wif you when de 'vangiles' done went on home?"

"Sis' Tuncil tole him 'at we couldn't expect to have de speret al'ays, an' when she go to speak 'bout de ole patr'orchs, he say:

"'Oh don't talk to me 'bout dem ole patr'orchs! Dey wuzn't no Christians. Dey have all de ways an' actions of de rankes' sinners.' An' he say dem ole men don't know nothin'! Dey never did see a steamboat er travel on de cars. No, ended, dey couldn't keep up wif dese times! Why, ef dey wuz heah now, an' anybody wuz to speak to 'em through de telephome, dey'd drap daid!

"'Sis' Tuncil got so mad she tole him he could jes go to de debel, where he b'long, fuh all she keer; an' she tole him he done set 'roun' an' listen to white scoffers tell he thought it wuz smart to talk lack dem. Fuh myse'f, I never say nothin' to Jim on de subjec' of his soul's salvation, 'cause I has no time to waste on doubters; 'cause de

Bible sholy never would er been ef it hadn't er been entended fuh us to go by it. I know Gawd ain't beholdin' to no colored person, so I ignores Jim on all church subjec's. Why, it's bad 'nough when we has dese white doubters goin' 'roun' sayin' dey aint goin' to be no heahafter, an' no hell-fire; but when colored people goes to peradin' dey ign'ance it's time to give up. No wonder de 'vangiles' say our church done been turned into a *ice plant*. Don't you know how long 'twuz befo' dem sinners would budge? Why, upon my soul, dey wouldn't even stan' up when de preacher ask 'em ef dey want to go to heaven. Dey jes set dare an' grin, wif dey eyes shinin' lack 'possums."

"Well," said Tichey Ann, "de 'vangiles' tetched 'em up on de subjec' of dat merry-go-round, didn't he?"

"Didn't he, though!" said Aunt Vesta and Ma-linda in the same breath.

"Yas'm," continued Aunt Tichey Ann, addressing Mrs. Gilmore, "he tole 'em dey done turn deyse'ves into feeble-minded. He say to em:

"'You set yo'se'ves down on dem wooden horses an' pay out yo' las' cent, an' thinks you's gwine somewhah—but you aint! You goes 'roun' an' 'roun' a few minnits, an' when you git off you aint been nowhah an' aint saw nothin' but de same people you could er saw an' kep yo' money.' An' he say to 'em: 'Why don't you go down to Salt Fork an' cut you a lot of stick-horses an' gallop 'roun' an' 'roun' de public square? You'd see jes as much an' be better off.' He say to 'em; 'I

never did see but one sensible person on 'dat merry-go-'round, an' dat wuz de man what own it an' pocket all de money.' An' he tole 'em dey could ride on dem wooden horses tell dey wuz blistered, an' dey wouldn't be nothin' but *fools* when dey got off."

"But wuzn't dat a quare song de 'vangiles' sung?" said Malinda, giving Mrs. Gilmore a sly wink as she walked across the room to put a stick of wood in the stove. "It wuz onuseyul, but it wuz gospel truth, I know, fuh it wuz tooken from de Bible. I would lack to have dat song ef I could git it. How do it go, Mrs. Washin'ton? You kin recollect' it, I know."

"Well," said Silvey, clearing her throat, "I reckon me an' Sis' Hunter might give it to you while Miss write it off. Let me see. How do it commence? Oh, yas, de chorus go lack dis," singing:

Oh, Eve! Oh, Eve! Eve, where is Adam?  
Adam is in de garding, pinning on leaves.

I want to go to heaven, I want to go right,  
Adam is in de garding, pinning on leaves;  
I want to go to heaven all dressed in white,  
Adam is in de garding, pinning on leaves.

Chorus:  
Oh, Eve! etc.

Dis worl' is sinful, dat I know,  
Adam's in de garding, pinning on leaves;  
Fuh my Saviour tole me so,  
Adam's in de garding, pinning on leaves.

Chorus:  
Oh, Eve! etc.

Dey is a way to fin' de Lawd,  
Adam's in de garding, pinning on leaves;  
An' we mus' take our Saviour's word,  
Adam's in de garding, pinning on leaves.

Chorus:  
Oh, Eve! etc.

As we go down de steeps of time,  
Adam's in de garding, pinning on leaves;  
We leave dis sinful worl' behin',  
Adam's in de garding, pinning on leaves.

Chorus:  
Oh, Eve! etc.

Dis is de way I long have sought,  
Adam's in de garding, pinning on leaves;  
An' moaned because I found it not,  
Adam's in de garding, pinning on leaves.

Chorus:  
Oh, Eve! etc.

You say yo' Savior set you free,  
Adam's in de garding, pinning on leaves;  
Why don't you let yo' neighbors see,  
Adam's in de garding, pinning on leaves.

Chorus:  
Oh, Eve! etc.

Den, buckle on yo' armor bright,  
Adam's in de garding, pinning on leaves;  
An' show de worl' a shining light,  
Adam's in de garding, pinning on leaves.

Chorus:  
Oh, Eve! etc.

Silvey and Aunt Vesta sang the song through,  
Aunt Tichey, Malinda and Ethey joining in the  
chorus. "Miss, don't you know dat's a good

song," said Aunt Tichey Ann when they had finished—"an' all Scripture, too. Kin you see anything in dat song to make anybody slack back an' loose intruss? Now, dey do say, 'at dat's de song 'at cool off Jim Johnson. Dey say 'at when dat congergation done sung dat song, de little speret 'at wuz hoverin' over Jim done tuck flight, an' dat nigger mos' split his sides laughin'. An' Brother Talton say 'at he heyard him talkin' as he went on home, an' he say Jim say, 'Fore Gawd, ef niggers isn't de tarnashines' fools in dis worl'! an' he say no wonder de President is goin' to send 'em off to Afferca to live. An' Brother Talton say Jim laugh an' laugh!"

"Well," said Aunt Vesta indignantly, "I'd lack to know where Jim would be when de rest of de colored people is goin' to Afferca! 'Wouldn't he be on de same boat? Dat sassy, imp'dent nigger stop me one day, as I wuz passin' his house, an' say to me:

"'Did you know de President wuz goin' to Afferca to hunt a place to sen' de black people?'

"I tole him I didn't know what de President wuz goin' to do, but I know what I wuz goin' to do; an' dat wuz, stay *right heah in my own country*. I aint got no idee of goin' to no furren country. It would take a mighty strong vessel, an' it would have to be mighty close to de levy, an' de ropes an' chains dey tie me wif would have to be mighty strong. 'Sides, I say to him, I'm a great dodger an' I know I could hide in some white frien's basement."



"Yes, Aunt Vesta," said Mrs. Gilmore, "I'll hide you where they can't find you."

"Why, Miss," said Aunt Vesta excitedly, "go to dat furren country! Why, I has al'ays had de greates' horror of dem furren countries! Me go dare, where I can't step my foot out of do's 'thought hearin' dem wile beastes roarin'—dem wolves an' lions an' tigers. No'm, I 'spects to live while I's livin'. Why, dey could davour me in no time! No'm, I'm goin' to stay heah. I'm 'Merican. My fo'parents help to clear dis country. I got cloze! I got cloze! I don't have to go live in no heathen lan'! No'm, I don't want to be sorry I ever done been generated. I know three or fo' white men kin skeer three or fo' black men mighty bad. Now, dey couldn't skeer de black women; dey's braver en de men. But ef dey wuz to skeer de men on de boat, den de women would go; 'cause dey wouldn't want to be parted from dey husban's. But," said Aunt Vesta with energy, "I aint got no husban' to toll me on no boat, thank Gawd! I do know Jim kin be de mos' agervatin' nigger in dis worl'! You know what he's sayin' now? Why, he's sayin' he aint goin' to let his little gran'chile go to school no mo', 'cause she aint learnin' nothin'. He say she's been goin' to school a whole week an' aint learn nothin' but chick-a-dee-dee! He say ef dat's all de learnin' she gits in her haid goin' to school, she better stay home an' snuff ashes. He say he know chick-a-dee-dee his ownse'f, an' he aint ever step his foot in no school house of learnin'."

"Oh, Jim, shucks!" said Malinda—"dat's Jim's way. He is natchyully *sassy* an' lacks to make fun. I mos' kills myse'f laughin' at him; 'cause I knows he's jokin'."

"Well Sis' Yonnell," said Silvey, "we better be goin', er ole Santa Claus will fin' us all heah when he comes to fill de stockin's. Miss, please, ma'm, hang up a stockin' fuh me wif a hole in it so it will take lots to fill it."

"Oh, Miss," said Ethey, when Silvey and Aunt Tichey Ann had gone, "now jes didn't we have one of dem onlies' times listenin' to dem ole 'fore-de-war-times colored people!"

## CHAPTER XIII

One spring day Ethey's mother, yielding to the charms of a banjo player, set sail a second time upon the rugged sea of matrimony. Ethey left reluctantly her home in the big yard, casting many regretful glances at the trees and grass as she walked backward to the gate. She told Mrs. Gilmore that she hated to leave, but that, of course, as she loved her mother, it was necessary that she go with her to take care of her, since that man might get on a tear and try to do her some harm.

They went to live in a little house provided by the husband, who was more thrifty than the average banjo player. Ethey's interest in her studies was unabated. She kept up well with her classes, always, as she said, passing her grade. She spent many Saturdays at Mrs. Gilmore's, because the piano legs needed her, for the cook up there now had no little girl to twist and screw her fingers in the "curly-cues" of those piano legs, to get out the dust, and keep the rest of her furniture shining. Arriving at the place, she took up her work in the house as though she had just come in from the kitchen, dusting and arranging the books on the table, now and then peeping into one and asking if it had any "miracles" in it. She one day confided to Mrs. Gilmore that she didn't like figures because they didn't have "no miracles in them," and didn't "work no wonderment on her

min'," but that she intended to study them just the same, because she didn't want to fall behind in her classes.

Aunt Vesta was very proud of Ethey's advancement and helped her build many castles in the air. She was delighted that she was growing more confident and independent, and that she had ceased to worry about not being popular with her color. She often stopped by to tell Mrs. Gilmore of Ethey's progress in school. "Oh Miss, but dat chile is proud!" said she one day—"an' endependent! What you reckon she say to me yuther day when we wuz discussin' our color? She say:

"'Well, Sis' Hunter, I has too much ockerpation to disturb my mind 'bout people not lackin' me. Ef dey wants to lack me, dey kin; ef dey doesn't, dey kin let it alone. I doesn't entend to set down an' sniff ashes all my lifetime. To tell de trouf, it's *impertiral* to me whether they likes me er not!' When dat chile got off dat jaw-breaker—*impertiral*—I thought it would kill me."

Ethey, who was now eleven years old, enjoyed the study of geography very much. She told Aunt Vesta one day that she had really traveled thousands of miles in her mind since she had been studying geography; that she had been way out to California, and down into Florida and New Orleans, and had even been "wadin' 'roun' in the Gulf of Mexico."

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Mrs. Gilmore had been from home several months. When she returned, she was hardly in

the yard before she discovered Aunt Vesta entering by the side gate. "Good mornin', Miss," she said, crossing the lawn and going up to Mrs. Gilmore. "I heyard de C. & A. whistle, an' I give myse'f time to git heah time you did, so I could give you de fuss welcome. I hates to greet you with bad news, but po' little Ethey is ve'ry sick. She had de grippe in March, an' den she start back to school befo' she got well an' raylapsed, an' now de doctor say 'at she have de gallopin' consumption or de tubuckalosis, dey don't know which. Co'se, I know de doctor talks 'bout consumption an' tubuckalosis lots of times when he better be talkin' 'bout somethin' else, an' he have to have his say ef he say right er wrong. But, yit an' still, dey say Ethey is ve'y sick, an' ev'rybody seem to think 'at she won't git well. I hope an' pray dey's all mistaken. It do seem so on-natchul fuh dat chile to die when she crave so to live, an' have sich high aims.

"But, Miss, let me he'p you to straighten yo' things out," as she followed Mrs. Gilmore into the house. "I might as well be doin' somethin' while I'm talkin'; 'cause, somehow, workin' 'roun' an' straightenin' up things always gits my mind in good circulation, an' I kin talk better. Well, heah comes yo' trunks. I kin shake out yo' dresses fuh you an' hang 'em up, ef nothin' else." She was soon engaged in shaking out and hanging up dress-skirts—stopping now and then to comment on something.

"I'm in my elerment, now, you know, Miss, fuh I have spent part of my lifetime bein' lady's maid,

an' I do so enjoy han'lin' ladies' pretty cloze. En fact, Miss, I have a great craven fuh rich things an' rich people. I never could stan' po' folks, nor po' folks' ways. I don't think I commit any sin, neither, fuh de Savior of us all, when heah on earth, manifest a great intrust in rich people. Don't you recollect when He wuz talkin' to de multitude, he stopped when He saw Mezackeus up de sycamore tree, an' call out to him an' say: 'Mezackeus, come down. This day I will abide in thy house.' Now you know, Jesus knowd 'at Mesackeus wuz rich; 'cause Jesus knowd all things, an' co'se He knowd he'd git a good dinner at Mezackeus' house.

"Well, now do tell me, Miss, what's dem little thin's you got wrapt up so keerful dare?" As Mrs. Gilmore unwrapped and set aside each article, Aunt Vesta exclaimed: "Well, ef dey isn't a little wash-tub an' wash-boa'd! An' a cloze-wringer, an' a cloze-rack! Please, ma'm, did you bring them to po' little Ethey? Won't dat please dat little chile? An' ef dare isn't a little doll wif golden colored hair! I do hope an' pray 'at she'll live to enjoy all dese treasures; fuh dey is real treasures to a chile.

"But, don't chillun in dese times have lots mo' to git enjoyment out of den dey did when I wuz little! But I know dey does'nt *git* no mo' en we did. Why, when I wuz little, we use to pick up ole pieces of broken crockery an' mushel shells, an' haf to emagine dey wuz fine dishes. An' funniture! Why, we set on ole stumps, with splinters stickin' us mos' to de bone, an' we make

lack it wuz a fine cheer, uphostered wif de fines' springs an' tapistry. I know Mrs. Cunnin' Gains didn't git one speck mo' enjoyment out of all her rich funniture en we did out er our make lack funniture. I do b'lieve on my soul, Miss, 'at chillun in ole times got mo' pleasure out of emaginin' 'at nothin' wuz somethin' en chillun in dese days git out of all dey new-fangled toys—steamboats floatin on de water, an' railroad track, an' sho 'nough engine an' cars runnin' on it.

"Little chillun kin git so much pleasure out of emagination. Why, even grown people kin. Now heahs me. I kin set down under de cottonwood tree an' listen to de wind blowin' through de leaves, an' terreckly I'm a young gal an' de wind in de cottonwood trees is sweet music, an' I kin feel myse'f wafted 'roun' to de time of dat music, an' I'm dressed very fine, an' I even have de long lady-finger flowers hitched on my haid fuh curls, an' I kin see all my ole jewlarkies on de flo' dancin', an' I kin enjoy myse'f fine, tell I heahs de prompter say: 'Ladies to de right, swing er coquette.' But when I starts 'roun' an' gives my haid a extra toss an' flourish to make my lady-finger curls float in de air, an' my rhumatiz gramps me, an' it brings me to my right mind—I finds myse'f a ole woman, settin' in a split-bottom cheer in de yard, an' de music done stopt, an' co'se all my ole jewlarkies,—my admirers, as Miss Fannie use to say, done disappear. But I jes mus' hush my mouth. I don't want to ramble on tell you'll be sorry you come home."

A few days after this, as Mrs. Gilmore sat in

the swing on the lawn, Aunt Vesta entered the yard. "I jes stopped in to tell you how po' little Etthey is," she said. "I thought may be you didn't know how much worse she is. De doctor says now 'at she sho 'nough have de gallopin' consumption an' won't live longer en de leaves begin to fall. I do hope you'll go to see her agin; she do so enjoy seein' her friends an' hearin' 'em talk. An', would you b'lieve it, Miss, weak an' sick as dat little thing is, she gits up ev'ry day an' walks out in de air, an' goes to see her nex' do' neighbors, an' sets in de yard, an' plays wif dem little colored chillun. An' ef you could see dem little colored chillun singin' an' dancin' to entertain dat little dyin' chile, you couldn't hardly keep from cryin', I know. En fact, all de little colored chillun in de neighborhood seem to do all in dey power to make her few days on earth as enjoy'ble as dey kin. Dat yard is jes full of chillun tryin' to entertain her. She sho is pop'lar wif her color now.

"An' of all de diff'ent kin's of entertainments, dem little chillun have 'em! Dey plays lady-come-to-see, an' church an' opery, an' dey even have street fair an' horse-racin'. Yas'm! An' dey horse-racin' cert'n'y is natchul. Dis mornin' me an' Sis' Mowin watch 'em from de winder, an' when dey'd bring out dem horses, of all de antics you ever did see! Why you couldn't hardly b'lieve how natchul dey'd seem. Two er three of dem little chillun would be on stick-horses, an' den two er three would be blowin' horns an' beatin' tin pans fuh de brass band. An' dey'd



have Etthey in a rockin' cheer in de shadies' place dey kin fin'. An' when dat brass ban' strike up, an' dem race horses start, it really wuz right excitin'. Dey'd make dey horses rah up an' plunge tell I'd mos' feel 'at I wuz at a sho 'nough horse race. You know, dat's one of my weaknesses, lovin' to see a horse-race, an', somehow, de speret hasn't ever squinched my fondness fuh horse-racin'.

"Sis' Lucy Barbery tole me las' summer 'at she thought it wuz very foolish in me, a proffessin' Christian, to go to races. But I tole her 'at Gawd made de race-horse jes de same as he made me an' her, an' 'at he made race-horses to run races, an' co'se he expect people to go out dare to see 'em run dem races. No'm, I never kin miss 'em. An' I always gits in free; fuh dey is always some white person near de gate what knows me, an' dey say, 'Pass right in, Aunt Vesta.' I don't b'lieve 'at I commit a sin goin' to horse-racin', 'cause I'm jes lack Gawd made me. Gawd made me to love de horse-race, an' nobody can't he'p bein' lack Gawd made 'em. Why, Miss, ef I wuz to git up some mornin' an' feel 'at I didn't want to see a fine horse-race, I'd think 'at I wuz goin' to die.

"But, look, Miss, please, ma'm, you see dat poatly colored man," referring to a large black man passing the place, "dat's our new preacher, sent us las' conferance. We like him fine. He's very jokey—sometimes I think he is too jokey in de *pulpit*. Now, las' Sunday night we had two converts, an we wuz all feelin' very uplifted in

speret, an' right dare he haf to tell a joke. He say:

" 'I read in de paper 'at dare wuz two black men talkin', an' one black man say to de yuther: "Did you know 'at all dem ole patr'archs an' apostles wuz colored?" "No," say de yuther one. "Yas," say he; "dey wuz *all* colored." Den de yuther one say: "Dey wuzn't all colored; I know 'at Peter wuzn't colored; ef Peter had er been colored, dat chicken never would er crowed three times." "

"Ev'rybody holler an' laugh, but I wuz so out of patience wif him fuh throwin' us off de track lack dat 'at I say to myse'f, 'I won't laugh,' an' I kep' my face straight a minnit, but fuss thing I knows I laugh right out—I jes couldn't he'p it.

"Well, I mus' go. I know you's tired of my ramblin' talk. I expect de Brother will make me a past'ral visit while he's in de neighborhood. Miss, I want to tell you why I haven't ever wore dat white collar an' necktie you sent me. It come in time fuh de quarterly meetin'; but de presidin' elder is a widower, you know, an' I al'ays wears my deep black when he comes. I don't want him to think 'at I's settin' up to him. He's al'ays talkin' in de *pulpit* 'bout how he aint goin' to marry no mo', an' aint thinkin' nothin' 'tall 'bout no woman; but I jes know he is er he wouldn't be talkin' so much 'bout it. So I'm keerful to wear my full mournin', I don't want him to think I'm settin' up to him," said Aunt Vesta, laughing.

"Miss, I thought I'd tell you 'at any fraish

aiggs er oranges er lemons 'at you'd have to spare would be very thankfully received by Ethey an' her mother."

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Ethey lingered several weeks, growing weaker day by day, and she was finally confined to her bed. Lonie, Mary and Johnny, who had been her first classmates never failed to come sometime during the day to amuse her. They were never at a loss to devise some means of entertainment. One favorite pastime was playing "opera." From an imaginary stage at the side of the room they gave samples of every kind of entertainment seen on the boards, from the clog dance to the most agonizing operatic singing. Lonie, who in the days of the memory verses had from fright and embarrassment been chief weeper, had now developed into a star actress, while Johnny's shuffling dancing and monkey-shines never failed of an encore from Ethey. The child sat up in bed, supported by pillows, and, dressed in white satin, with a long train, occupied, in imagination, a box at the opera. She never failed to improvise an opera bag, with opera glasses and fan. So pathetic was the dying child's impersonation of a young lady in the midst of life and gayety that more than once the mother and Aunt Vesta had been forced, amid the laughter and encores, to turn away to hide their tears.

One morning Malinda saw Ethey regarding her hands very carefully, now and then holding them up to the sunlight, as though trying to look

through a piece of transparency. Finally she said:

"Mama, you know what Sis Hunter said about her little girl turnin' white when she went to heaven? Do you know 'at my hands begins to look most lack a white lady's? Did ever you see a picture of a black angel? Sis' Hunter say 'at she knows black people mus' turn white up in heaven; 'cause ef dey didn't, dey'd be a ruxion up dare, when white angels meets black angels walkin' on dem golden sidewalks. She say she know dey mus' match in color, at least.

"Mama, do you know 'at I has to laugh every time I thinks 'bout dat big story 'at I tole dem little colored chilluns 'bout how I use to be white, an' played so long in de coal-shed 'at I turn black, an' den took sich a turble hiccough befo' I could git ashes to wash off de black 'at it wouldn't come off. Co'se dem little chillun knowd 'at I wuz jes talkin' big. But, do you know, 'at when I use to stay so much in de house, an' Miss let me talk so big, an' feel so big, I did use to sho 'nough fuhgit my color, an' when I'd see dem little colored chillun laggin' 'long de street, I did use to say to myse'f: 'I cert'n'y don't b'long to dey nation.' An' would you b'lieve it, mama, I use to run past dat big ole lookin'-glass in de house an' turn my haid de yuther way, to keep from glimpsin' my color an' gittin' a set-back?"

"Yo' color is all right, honey," said the mother, with difficulty controlling her emotions. "Have a clean heart an' be ready fuh de white garment, an' you'll have no cause fuh fear."

"But, mama, don't you recollect' how my color used to hate me, an' call me Miss High-an'-Mighty, 'cause I didn't want to be colored an' ign'ant? But now, when I can't stand up, an' aint ridin' in de hind part of Miss's phaeton, even ole Aunt Susannah don't seem to hate me so. Jes yistiddy I heyard her say to Sis' Hunter: 'Oh but dat little humant sho is game to drag herse'f 'roun' tryin' to git enjoyment, when she is so near daid. But mama, why did dey all hate me so when I wuz happy an' flourishin'? Why wait to love me when I'm most in my grave?'"

"Don't worry yo' min' 'bout dat, honey," said the mother, weeping.

"Well, it do seem at I have been werryin' myse'f fuh nothin' tryin' to enjoy life when I am so near daid. Ef dem chillun comes to see me dis mornin', tell 'em I can't play wif 'em today—at I feels 'at I mus' rest myse'f a while.

"An', 'fore I fuhgits it, I wants to tell you 'bout my toys an' playthin's. Dem little colored chillun has been very good to me, comin' every day to cut up dey monkey-shines an' make me laugh, an' I wants all my playthin's devided 'tween 'em. Give my little wash-tub, wif de wash-board an' wringer an' cloze rack, an' de little doll wif de golden colored hair, to Lonie; 'cause she thought dey wuz de pretties' of all my little playthin's, an' she use to tell me mo' funny yarns an' make me laugh mo' hearty en all dem yuther chillun 'ceptin' Johnny—dat little bricketty Johnny!" smiling and putting her hands to her mouth. "Give him my story-book wif all dem mericles in it—de story 'bout

Brittlebit—dat little donkey, an' dat man wif de funny stick what work sich wonders fuh him by jumpin' on people an' beatin' 'em mos' to death when he'd git in a tight place. An' give him my french-harp, too; fuh he may cry a little at dat funeral, but dat french-harp will come in mighty handy to liven up his little ole heels when he gits back from dat burryin'. An' give Mary my tea-set an' my doll bureau, too; 'cause she'll take great pains foldin' an' puttin her doll cloze away in sich fine order. An', Aunt Vesta, please, ma'm, give her my pretty new red ribbon, an' tell her to turn it into a necktie—an' wear it, so she won't look so solemn.

"An' don't fuhgit Lilly an' Jennyvee an' Sadie. Co'se, I know 'at dey wuzn't perfect, but maybe, as Sis' Hunter say dey live up to dey enlightenments. Divide up my yuther playthin's wif dem, an' de yuther little colored chillun what use to come to see me. I know you'll find plenty to go 'roun', so 'at none of 'em won't feel slighted. I don't see why I don't take mo' intress in goin' to heaven; maybe it's 'cause it's sich a round-about way to git dare. I use to love to heah tell of dem golden streets; but, somehow, I always felt I'd ruther stay heah an' walk on de grass.

"An' 'bout dat enshoence, mama, please, ma'm, don't spend all dat money on dat funeral, 'cause you'll need some of it to he'p buy you de home I wuz goin' to git fuh you ef I had er live long enough to git high-learnt an' teach school. An', mama, please don't have me too dressed up fuh my funeral. Git me a little plain shroud wif

pleats down de front—don't have no great fluffy chiffon on it. An' don't put no flowers in my hair. Jes tie my hair wif two little bows of white ribbon; fuh de blessed Jesus will know 'at I'm jes a little schoolgirl an' won't 'spect me to be too dressed up."

When Lonie, Mary and Johnny went an hour later to see Ethey, they were told by Aunt Vesta, who was trying to console Malinda, that "po' little Ethey had done give up an' gone on up to heaven, an'," she continued, "she didn't fuhgit none of her little playmates that have been so good to help her pass away her long werry days of sickness an' sufferin'; 'cause she has lef' keepsakes fuh you all, an' when her mama feels mo' lack it, she will give 'em to you, an' tell you all about it."

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"Miss," said Aunt Vesta to Mrs. Gilmore the day after the funeral, when discussing Ethey's sickness and death, "I mus' say 'at I do not understan' Gawd's way of doin' thin's in this life. Now, why let all de good-fuh-nothin' colored people live, what aint no comfort to deyse'ves an' nobody else, an' take dat chile what have sich grand idees, an' might er been a credit to her nation? Don't it seem pitterful 'at she haf to go when she crave so to live, an' after raisin' dat po' little thin's expectations by pickin' out Mancipation Day fuh her birthday?"

"De Scripture say: 'Be fervent in prayer, an' you shall remove mountains.' Didn't we pray fuh dat chile to git well an' live to bless her na-

tion? Didn't de preachers an' all de good people pray in de church an' Sunday-school an' prayer-meetin' fuh weeks fuh dat chile to git well? But, upon my soul, it didn't have no mo' effect en de chatterin' er so many blackbirds! Well, dare goes my tongue agin! I hope I don't commit no sin havin' my own idees 'bout how Gawd ought to do; but I jes always wuz proned to 'spress my thoughts.

"Oh, but wuzn't she a quare chile, an' don't you b'lieve that she have glimpses of heahafter when she talked 'bout dem gold an' silver sky carr'ages? Fuh who knows but when our po' fleetin' sperets is caught up in de air, de good Lawd may meet us with some kind of sky conveyance. We know 'at He have in times past sent flamin' charrets to carry His faithful ones home to glory."